

ANNOUNCER: FUNDING FOR
"COUNTRY MUSIC" WAS PROVIDED

BY THE FOLLOWING MEMBERS

OF THE BETTER ANGELS SOCIETY:

THE BLAVATNIK FAMILY FOUNDATION,

THE SCHWARTZ/REISMAN FOUNDATION,

THE PFEIL FOUNDATION,

DIANE AND HAL BRIERLEY,

JOHN AND CATHERINE DEBS,

THE FULLERTON FAMILY
CHARITABLE FUND,

BY THE PERRY AND DONNA
GOLKIN FAMILY FOUNDATION,

JAY ALIX AND UNA JACKMAN,

MERCEDES T. BASS,

AND FRED AND DONNA SEIGEL

AND BY THESE ADDITIONAL MEMBERS.

[BOB WILLIS AND HIS TEXAS
PLAYBOYS' "NEW SAN ANTONIO
ROSE" PLAYING]

WILLIS:

OH, TEAR IT DOWN, MR. MAN.

TEAR IT DOWN NOW.

MAJOR FUNDING WAS PROVIDED
BY: THE ANNENBERG FOUNDATION;

BY THE ARTHUR Vining DAVIS
FOUNDATIONS,

DEDICATED TO STRENGTHENING
AMERICA'S FUTURE

THROUGH EDUCATION;

BY BELMONT UNIVERSITY,
WHERE STUDENTS CAN STUDY

MUSIC AND MUSIC BUSINESS
IN THE HEART OF MUSIC CITY;

BY THE SOUNDTRACK OF AMERICA--
MADE IN TENNESSEE--

TRAVEL INFORMATION
AT TNVACATION.COM;

BY THE METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT
OF NASHVILLE

AND DAVIDSON COUNTY;

BY ROSALIND P. WALTER;

BY THE CORPORATION
FOR PUBLIC BROADCASTING;

AND BY VIEWERS LIKE YOU.

THANK YOU.

â a HEADING DOWN SOUTH
TO THE LAND OF THE PINE â a

â a THUMBING MY WAY INTO
NORTH CAROLINE â a

â a STARING UP THE ROAD,
PRAY TO GOD I SEE HEADLIGHTS â a

â a SO, ROCK ME, MAMA,
LIKE A WAGON WHEEL â a

â a ROCK ME, MAMA,
ANY WAY YOU FEEL â a

â a HEY, MAMA, ROCK ME

[CHEERING AND APPLAUSE]

HANK WILLIAMS:
â a WHEN YOU ARE SAD AND LONELY

â a AND HAVE NO PLACE TO GO

â a COME TO SEE ME, BABY,
AND BRING ALONG SOME DOUGH â a

â a AND WE'LL GO HONKY TONKIN',
HONKY TONKIN' â a

â a HONKY TONKIN'...

MAN: TWO THINGS--
BEER AND DANCING.

WELL, AS WE LIKE
TO SAY ABOUT DANCING,

IF YOU DANCE, YOU GOT A CHANCE.
[LAUGHS]

THEY CALLED THEM "HONKY-TONKS,"

ROAD HOUSES, ICE HOUSES,
"SKULL ORCHARDS."

[LAUGHS]
SKULL ORCHARD. UH.

WELL, THAT'S JUST A WAY
OF DESCRIBING A...

A NIGHTCLUB THAT HAS
REGULAR FIGHTS IN IT, YOU KNOW?

SOMEBODY'S ALWAYS GETTING
POPPED IN THE SKULL.

BUT THERE LITERALLY WERE PLACES
WHERE THEY'D PUT CHICKEN WIRE

OVER THE FRONT OF THE STAGE
TO KEEP PEOPLE

FROM GETTING HIT
WITH BEER BOTTLES.

WILLIAMS: â„“ WHEN
YOU AND YOUR BABY... â„“

MAN: IN THE HEYDAY
OF HONKY-TONK MUSIC,

THE BEER WAS FLOWING,
THE CIGARETTES WERE LIT.

COUPLES WERE DANCING.
THEY'D RUB

STOMACH TO STOMACH,
CHEEK TO CHEEK.

WILLIAMS: â„“ HONKY-TONKIN',
HONKY-TONKIN', HONEY, BABY â„“

â„“ WE'LL GO HONKY-TONKIN'
AROUND THIS TOWN â„“

BENSON: ALCOHOL
AND MEN AND WOMEN TOGETHER

CREATE VIOLENCE, FIGHTS.

WHEN THERE'S A FIGHT,

YOU DON'T STOP PLAYING.

IT'S THE ONE RULE.

KEEP PLAYING.

THE OTHER THING IS,
AND I'VE HAD TO,

IS A GUITAR IS A GREAT WEAPON.

[LAUGHS] YOU KNOW?

USUALLY, SOMEONE
WOULD GET OUT OF HAND

AND MAKE A PASS
AT THE WRONG WOMAN.

LINES WERE CROSSED,
PROPRIETY BLURRED.

MUSIC GOOD.

YOU KNOW, THE DANCING GOOD.

FIGHTS WOULD BREAK OUT,
LIPS WOULD BE BUSTED.

BLOOD WOULD BE FLOWING,
AND THEN THEY'D MAKE UP

AND GO BACK TO DANCE
AND SMOKE SOME MORE CIGARETTES

AND DRINK SOME MORE WHISKEY.

GREAT CULTURE.

WILLIAMS: â„“ HONKY-TONKIN'

â„“ HONEY, BABY, WE GOING
HONKY-TONKIN' â„“

â„“ AROUND THIS TOWN

MAN: â„“ HEY, THERE,
TURN IT LOOSE! â„“

MAN: AFTER THE WAR, EVERYBODY
CAME HOME SUPER CHARGED.

ONE OF THE THINGS THAT WENT
WITH THAT WAS AN ELECTRICITY

AND A BIT OF AN ENERGY

THAT CALLED FOR SOMETHING
BESIDES FIDDLE TUNES.

ALL OF A SUDDEN, IT WAS ABOUT
STOMPING AND DANCING.

THAT CALLED FOR DRUMS
AND THAT CALLED FOR

TWANGING GUITARS AND THIS...
A STEEL GUITAR

THAT WOULD CUT THROUGH THE NOISE

AND GET ABOVE THE NOISE
OF THE CROWD AND THE FIGHTS,

AND THE HOOPING
AND THE HOLLERING

AS THE NIGHT WENT ON.

IT ALWAYS GETS LOUDER
AT A HONKY-TONK

AND MORE RAMBUNCTIOUS.

AS YOU MOVE TOWARD MIDNIGHT,
THE EDGE MOVES CLOSER TO YOU.

SO, YOU NEED
AN EDGY SOUND, YOU KNOW,

THAT CUTS THROUGH THAT.

AND ELECTRICITY
WAS YOUR FRIEND.

NARRATOR: IN THE LATE 1940s
AND EARLY FIFTIES,

AMERICANS FOUND THEMSELVES
LIVING IN A WORLD

THAT COULD END AT ANY MOMENT,
AND EVERYTHING WAS CHANGING--

IN SCIENCE, IN THE ECONOMY,

IN RACE RELATIONS,

IN ART, IN LITERATURE,
AND IN MUSIC.

COUNTRY MUSIC
ADAPTED TO THE TIMES.

MEN HAD BEEN TO WAR;
WOMEN HAD BEEN TO WORK;

THE DIVORCE RATE WAS
HITTING RECORD LEVELS.

SONGS THAT DEALT OPENLY
ABOUT CHEATING AND DRINKING--

TOPICS ONCE CONSIDERED BEYOND
THE PALE OF RESPECTABILITY--

BECAME AS POPULAR AS SONGS
WITH MORE TRADITIONAL THEMES

LIKE MOTHER OR A SENTIMENTAL
LONGING FOR HOME.

AND THE NEW SONGS
HAD A NEW SOUND--

A PIERCING ELECTRIC GUITAR,
A DRIVING DRUM BEAT,

INSISTENT BASS, AND A VOICE
THAT DELIVERED LYRICS

ABOUT BOTH GOOD TIMES
AND HEARTBREAK

WITH AN EMOTIONAL URGENCY.

THE NEW SOUND
HAD SPRUNG UP

IN DARKENED TAVERNS
AND BARROOMS

AROUND THE OIL FIELDS
OF TEXAS AND OKLAHOMA,

HAD SPREAD TO CALIFORNIA
AND THEN TO

THE INDUSTRIAL CITIES
OF THE NORTH.

THE BEER HALLS WERE TOO NOISY

FOR MUSICIANS PLAYING
ACOUSTIC INSTRUMENTS

AND TOO SMALL FOR
THE BIG DANCE BANDS

THAT PLAYED WESTERN SWING.

I THINK
THE HONKY-TONK MUSIC, UM,

CAME FROM WESTERN SWING,
AND IT JUST PARED IT DOWN.

BOB WILLS HAD A BIG BAND,
BIG AS HE COULD AFFORD OR WANT.

HONKY-TONKS WERE SMALL BANDS,
AND IT WAS THE SAME THING
THAT HAPPENED

WITH THE BIG BANDS, YOU KNOW.

YOU WENT FROM 24 PEOPLE
DOWN TO 8 PEOPLE.

IT WAS A SINGLE FIDDLE
INSTEAD OF 3 FIDDLES.

IT WAS ONE GUITAR
INSTEAD OF 3 GUITARS.

UH, NO PIANO.
NO HORMS.

YOU KNOW?

AND, UM, A SPARE
KIND OF SOUND.

NARRATOR: IF A LIVE BAND
WASN'T AVAILABLE,

THE TAVERN OWNERS
KEPT THE PATRONS HAPPY

WITH A JUKEBOX IN THE CORNER

THAT COULD BOOM OUT
A SONG FOR A NICKEL.

BY 1946, THERE WERE NEARLY
300,000 JUKEBOXES IN THE NATION.

4 BILLION NICKELS
WERE DROPPED INTO THEM.

â¤

BUT THE NEW SOUND
WOULD BE JUST ONE WAY

COUNTRY MUSIC CHANGED
AFTER WORLD WAR II.

A TENNESSEE FARM BOY WOULD GO
IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION,

BECOMING A CROONER OF LOVE SONGS
THAT APPEALED TO PEOPLE

WHO NORMALLY CONSIDERED
HILLBILLY MUSIC BENEATH THEM.

THE LEADER OF
A STRING BAND FROM KENTUCKY

NOW ASSEMBLED A NEW
GROUP OF MUSICIANS,

INCLUDING A YOUNG TEXTILE-MILL
WORKER FROM NORTH CAROLINA.

TOGETHER THEY WOULD
PUSH THE BOUNDARIES

OF ONE OF THE OLDEST FORMS
OF COUNTRY MUSIC

INTO ITS OWN CATEGORY,
WITH ITS OWN NAME.

STILL, HONKY-TONK MUSIC
WAS TAKING OVER,

LED AT FIRST BY
A SHARECROPPER'S SON FROM TEXAS,

WHO CARRIED THE NEW
ELECTRIFIED SOUND

ALL THE WAY TO THE STAGE
OF THE GRAND OLE OPRY.

WILLIAMS: â„“ 6 MORE MILES
AND LEAVE MY DARLING... â„“

NARRATOR: BUT IT WAS A SKINNY
SINGER-SONGWRITER FROM ALABAMA,

WHO ROCKETED TO FAME
AND WAS GONE

BEFORE HE REACHED
THE AGE OF 30,

WHO WOULD LEAVE AN IMPERISHABLE
MARK ON AMERICAN MUSIC.

WILLIAMS: â„“ 6 MORE MILES
LONG AND SAD... â„“

NARRATOR:
HE COULD GET ANY CROWD
DANCING TO HIS GOOD-TIME BEAT,
THEN BRING THEM TO TEARS
WITH HIS SONGS OF ALMOST
INEXPRESSIBLE HEARTACHE,
WRITTEN FROM HIS OWN
PERSONAL TORMENTS.

WILLIAMS: â„“ OH, I HEAR
THE TRAIN A-COMIN' â„“
â„“ BRINGIN' MY DARLIN'
BACK HOME â„“
â„“ 6 MORE MILES
TO THE GRAVEYARD â„“

â„“ AND I'LL BE
LEFT HERE ALL ALONE â„“
â„“ 6 MORE MILES...

MAN: HE MADE YOU THINK HE WAS
SINGING STRICTLY TO YOU.

"THIS GUY UNDERSTANDS ME.
HE KNOWS THE PAIN I FEEL.

"HE KNOWS WHAT I'VE DONE
AND, UH, WHAT I'VE EXPERIENCED.

"HE KNOWS IT JUST AS WELL
AS I DO

AND THIS SONG HE'S SINGING,
HE'S SINGING DIRECTLY TO ME."

WILLIAMS: â„“ I EVER HAD...

MY MOTHER USED TO
SING ME SONGS AT NIGHT
TO MAKE ME GO TO SLEEP,
AND SHE WAS A PRETTY
DARN GOOD SINGER.
AND LATER ON IN LIFE, I LEARNED
THAT THOSE SONGS THAT I LOVED

THAT SHE WAS SINGING ME
WERE SONGS BY HANK WILLIAMS.

SO, I WAS A HUGE
HANK WILLIAMS FAN

BEFORE I EVEN KNEW
WHO HANK WAS.

HANK WILLIAMS HAD THE GUTS
TO PUT INTO WORDS

WHAT WE WERE ALL
THINKING AND FEELING

BUT WERE TOO EMBARRASSED TO SAY.

HE CUT RIGHT TO THE BONE.

â  a

â  a

â  a NOW, IF YOU LOVE YOUR MAMA

â  a AND YOU TREAT HER RIGHT

â  a BUT SHE KEEPS ON FUSSIN'
AT YOU EVERY DAY AND NIGHT â  a

â  a AND SHE'S GONNA
TRIFLE ON YA â  a

â  a THEY'LL DO IT EVERY TIME

â  a AND WHEN YOUR BABY
STARTS TO STEPPIN' â  a

â  a LORD, YOU NEARLY
LOSE YOUR MIND â  a

â  a NOW, IF YOUR MAMA'S MEAN, TAKE
A TIP FROM ME, LOCK HER UP... â  a

MAN: I LOVED ERNEST TUBB.

"THREE CHORDS AND THE TRUTH,"
THAT'S PRETTY MUCH ERNEST.

HIS SONGS WEREN'T COMPLICATED;

ANYBODY WHO COULD PLAY
A LITTLE GUITAR COULD SING THEM.

AND THAT'S WHY I THINK
HE WAS SO POPULAR.

NARRATOR: BY 1946, THE FIELD OF
HONKY-TONK SINGERS

WAS ALREADY CROWDED--
BUT NO ONE WAS BIGGER THAN

THE 6-FOOT TEXAN WITH
A TOOTHY SMILE AND A DEEP VOICE:

ERNEST TUBB.

TUBB: â„“ ...LOVING, LORD,
BUT WATCH HER CLOSELY, TOO â„“

â„“ 'CAUSE SHE'S GONNA...

NARRATOR: EVERY SATURDAY
AFTERNOON, HE WOULD BROADCAST

A NATIONAL HALF-HOUR RADIO SHOW,
THE CHECKERBOARD JAMBOREE,

THEN PERFORM ON
THE LIVE BROADCAST

OF THE GRAND OLE OPRY

FROM THE RYMAN AUDITORIUM,

HEARD BY MILLIONS OF LISTENERS
ON RADIO STATION WSM.

TUBB: â„“ YOU COME HOME
TO YOUR MAMA... â„“

NARRATOR: AFTER THE SHOW,
HE WOULD LOAD

HIS BAND, THE TEXAS TROUBADOURS,

INTO HIS TOUR BUS
AND SET OFF FOR

AS MANY PERSONAL APPEARANCES
AS POSSIBLE

BEFORE HE HAD TO BE
BACK IN NASHVILLE

FOR THE NEXT
SATURDAY BROADCAST.

TUBB:
â„“ ...STARTS TO STEPPIN',
LORD, YOU NEARLY LOSE... â„“

NARRATOR: TUBB BELIEVED

THAT PART OF HIS POPULARITY

WAS BECAUSE HIS VOICE
REALLY WASN'T ALL THAT GOOD.

TUBB: â„“ ...SAYS THAT
SHE IS TRUE, BUT WAIT... â„“

BENSON: YOU KNOW,
IT AIN'T CARUSO.

"WHY ARE YOU FAMOUS, ERNEST?"

HE SAYS, "WELL,
I'M FAMOUS BECAUSE

"AN OLD BOY PUTS A QUARTER--
A NICKEL IN THE JUKEBOX

"AND PUTS IT ON AND SAYS,

'HELL, I CAN SING
AS WELL AS THAT GUY.'"

YOU KNOW? [LAUGHS]
HE BRAGS TO HIS GIRLFRIEND.

TUBB: â„“ LOSE YOUR MIND

AND IT DRIVES YOU CRAZY.

MAN: I'VE HEARD PEOPLE SAY,
"WELL, HE NEVER COULD SING."

AND I SAID, "NO, AND HE GOES
TO THE BANK EVERY MONTH

AND PUTS A LOT OF MONEY IN THERE
BECAUSE HE CAN'T SING."

NARRATOR: AFTER HEARING
HIS FIRST JIMMIE RODGERS RECORD

AT THE AGE OF 15
IN BROWNWOOD, TEXAS,

ERNEST TUBB'S
SOLE AMBITION IN LIFE

HAD BEEN TO FOLLOW
IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF HIS IDOL.

TUBB: â„“ I'LL BE LOVING AMERICA
THE YODELER â„“

â„“ JIMMIE RODGERS
YOU ALL KNEW BY NAME... â„“

NARRATOR: IN 1936,
HE MET RODGERS' WIDOW,

AND TOGETHER THEY WENT ON
A JIMMIE RODGERS TRIBUTE TOUR

TO SMALL TOWN MOVIE THEATERS
IN SOUTH TEXAS.

SHE EVEN LET HIM PLAY
THE FAMOUS MARTIN GUITAR

THAT RODGERS HIMSELF
HAD ONCE USED.

TUBB: â„“ IT LEFT MANY EYES
FILLED WITH TEARS â„“

â„“ HE GAVE UP THE STRIFE
IN THE PRIME OF HIS LIFE â„“

â„“ SAID GOOD-BYE
AFTER 35 YEARS â„“

NARRATOR: WHEN A TONSILLECTOMY
LEFT HIS THROAT BADLY DAMAGED,

TUBB COULD NO LONGER
YODEL LIKE HIS HERO.

HE STARTED WRITING
HIS OWN SONGS,

DEVELOPING A WARMER
VOCAL STYLE,

BUT WHEN HE LEARNED THAT PEOPLE
COULDN'T HEAR HIS ACOUSTIC MUSIC

ON JUKEBOXES IN THE LOUD
ROADHOUSES AROUND FORT WORTH,

HE BROUGHT IN A MUSICIAN TO PLAY
AN ELECTRIFIED LEAD GUITAR

AT HIS NEXT RECORDING SESSION.

THE RESULT
WAS A STRING OF HITS,

STARTING WITH
"WALKING THE FLOOR OVER YOU."

TUBB: â„“ YOU LEFT ME
AND YOU WENT AWAY... â„“

FOSTER: YOU KNOW, THERE WAS
A SERVICE STATION

BUILT ABOUT A MILE AND A QUARTER
FROM OUR FARM,

UP ON HIGHWAY 108.

MR. SIM, WHO OWNED IT,
PUT IN A JUKEBOX.

TUBB: â„“ YOU DID, DEAR, BUT
I DO KNOW THAT YOU'RE GONE... â„“

FOSTER: AND I COULD
BE OUT IN THE FIELDS

AND SOMEBODY WOULD
PLAY THE JUKEBOX.

AND I COULD HEAR IT.

NOW, I COULDN'T ALWAYS
HEAR THE WORDS,

BUT I COULD TELL
WHAT MELODY IT WAS.

THERE WAS ONLY ONE ARTIST
THAT PLAYED ON THAT JUKEBOX

I COULD UNDERSTAND EVERY WORD,
EVEN FROM WHERE I WAS,

AND THAT WAS ERNEST TUBB.

AND I SAID TO
MY MOTHER ONE DAY,

"WHEN I GET ME A RECORD COMPANY
SOMEDAY," WHICH WAS RIDICULOUS,

"I'M ONLY GOING TO SIGN ARTISTS

THAT ARE AS GOOD
AS ERNEST TUBB."

TUBB: â„“ NOW, DARLING,
YOU KNOW I LOVE YOU WELL... â„“

NARRATOR: IN 1947, ERNEST TUBB
AND THE COMEDIENNE MINNIE PEARL

HEADLINED AN OPRY CAST
THAT PLAYED FOR TWO NIGHTS

AT NEW YORK CITY'S

CARNEGIE HALL,

THE PALATIAL AND PRESTIGIOUS
VENUE FOR CLASSICAL MUSIC.

"BOY," TUBB SAID
AT THE START OF THE CONCERT,

"THIS PLACE COULD SURE
HOLD A LOT OF HAY."

TUBB: â„¢ I'M HOPING
AND I'M PRAYING... â„¢

NARRATOR:
THAT SAME YEAR, HE OPENED

THE ERNEST TUBB RECORD SHOP

IN DOWNTOWN NASHVILLE, NOT FAR
FROM THE RYMAN AUDITORIUM.

TO PUBLICIZE THE STORE,
TUBB STARTED

THE MIDNITE JAMBOREE,
BROADCAST ON LOCATION

IMMEDIATELY AFTER
THE GRAND OLE OPRY.

HE SERVED AS THE HOST,
PREFERRING TO HIGHLIGHT

OTHER ARTISTS AND THEIR SONGS,
RATHER THAN HIS OWN.

HE DID IT REMEMBERING
THE GENEROSITY

OF JIMMIE RODGERS' WIDOW
IN HELPING LAUNCH HIM

INTO THE MUSIC BUSINESS.

"WHAT CAN I DO TO REPAY YOU?"
HE HAD ASKED HER.

"JUST DO THE SAME FOR OTHERS,"
SHE ANSWERED.

HE DID.

TUBB: â„¢ WALKING
THE FLOOR OVER YOU â„¢

â„¢

STUART: THERE'S A SAYING
IN NASHVILLE,

"IT ALL BEGINS WITH A SONG."

SONGS ARE THE MAGIC CARPETS
THAT CHANGE THINGS.

WILLIAMS: â„“ AS WE
JOURNEY ALONG... â„“

EVERYTHING REMAINS THE SAME
UNTIL YOU FIND THE RIGHT SONG

AND THEN THINGS CHANGE.

THE WORLD CHANGED BECAUSE OF
HANK WILLIAMS' SONGS.

WILLIAMS: â„“ ...ARE WE...

WOMAN: ONE OF MY GRANDFATHER'S
MOST FAMOUS QUOTES,

HE USED TO SAY, "I DON'T KNOW
WHAT YOU MEAN BY COUNTRY MUSIC.

I JUST WRITE SONGS
THE WAY I KNOW HOW."

NARRATOR: IN THE LATE SUMMER
OF 1946,

HANK WILLIAMS WAS
JUST A FEW DAYS SHY

OF HIS 23rd BIRTHDAY.

THEY HAD BEEN A HARD 23 YEARS.

HE WAS BORN ON
SEPTEMBER 17, 1923,

IN A DIRT-FLOOR LOG HOUSE

HIS PARENTS RENTED
IN MOUNT OLIVE, ALABAMA,

AND WAS CHRISTENED HIRIAM,

AFTER ONE OF THE KINGS
IN THE OLD TESTAMENT.

HIS FATHER, LON, WHO HAD
RETURNED FROM WORLD WAR I

SUFFERING FROM SHELL SHOCK,
WORKED A VARIETY OF JOBS
UNTIL HIS CONDITION FORCED HIM
TO ENTER A VETERANS HOSPITAL
IN LOUISIANA,
IN EFFECT DEPARTING
FROM HIS SON'S LIFE.

HIS MOTHER LILLIE WAS
A STRONG AND AMBITIOUS WOMAN.

SHE MOVED HER SON AND DAUGHTER
TO A SUCCESSION OF TOWNS
IN SOUTHERN ALABAMA,
FINALLY ENDING UP
IN MONTGOMERY,
WHERE SHE OPENED UP
A BOARDINGHOUSE.

HER SON WAS FRAIL AND SKINNY,
PROBABLY THE RESULT OF
A CONGENITAL SPINAL DEFECT.

BUT HE WAS FUN-LOVING
AND OUTGOING,
AND PREFERRED THAT PEOPLE
CALL HIM HANK, NOT HIRIAM.

LILLIE ENCOURAGED
HIS INTEREST IN MUSIC,
SENDING HIM TO
A GOSPEL SINGING SCHOOL
AND GETTING HIM
HIS FIRST GUITAR AT AGE 8.

ALONG THE WAY, HE MET A BLACK
STREET MUSICIAN, RUFUS PAYNE,
KNOWN TO EVERYONE AS "TEE-TOT,"
WHO TAUGHT HIM CHORDS
ON THE GUITAR
AND LET THE BOY FOLLOW ALONG
AS HE AND HIS BAND
ROAMED THE STREETS

PLAYING FOR HANDOUTS.

"ALL THE MUSIC TRAINING
I EVER HAD,"

WILLIAMS SAID LATER,
"WAS FROM HIM."

STUART: THE BLACK MUSICAL
INFLUENCE IN COUNTRY MUSIC

IS IMMEASURABLE AS FAR
AS I'M CONCERNED.

IF YOU TOOK MR. LESLEY RIDDLE
OUT OF THE A.P. CARTER EQUATION

AS A SONG CATCHER
AND A SONG GATHERER,

IF YOU TOOK ARNOLD SHULTZ
OUT OF BILL MONROE'S LIFE,

OR IF YOU TOOK TEE-TOT
OUT OF HANK WILLIAMS' LIFE,

JUST THOSE 3 ALONE,
LOOK HOW DIFFERENT

IT WOULD HAVE TURNED OUT.

NARRATOR: IN MONTGOMERY,
WILLIAMS SHINED SHOES,

SANG ON STREET CORNERS
WHILE HE HAWKED

PEANUTS HIS MOTHER HAD ROASTED,

AND QUIT SCHOOL EARLY.

HE DEVELOPED A TASTE
FOR ALCOHOL AT 11,

AND WHEN HE WON
A LOCAL TALENT CONTEST,

SINGING A SONG HE HAD WRITTEN,
"WPA BLUES,"

HE IMMEDIATELY SPENT
HIS \$15 PRIZE

PARTYING WITH HIS FRIENDS.

RADIO STATION WSFA SOON

FEATURED HIM ON BROADCASTS

AS "THE SINGING KID."

ENCOURAGED, HE FORMED A BAND
CALLED THE DRIFTING COWBOYS,

WHICH PLAYED SMALL-TIME GIGS
AT THEATRES AND SCHOOLHOUSES

IN ALABAMA, GEORGIA,
AND THE FLORIDA PANHANDLE.

LILLIE WAS THE DRIVING FORCE
BEHIND IT,

PUTTING UP HANDBILLS, COLLECTING
THE MONEY AT THE DOOR,

AND CONSTANTLY SCOLDING HER SON

WHENEVER HE STRAYED,
WHICH WAS OFTEN.

MAN: IT'S HARD TO EXPLAIN HANK

UNLESS YOU GO BACK TO
THE WAY HE WAS RAISED.

HE WORKED THOSE LITTLE JOINTS.

HIS MOTHER LILLIE
WOULD TAKE HIM,

AND IF HE DIDN'T PLAY 'EM
JUST RIGHT, SHE'D CUFF HIM.

HE GREW UP WITH THAT.
"YOU DO IT RIGHT, BOY."

NARRATOR: BUT SHE ALSO
SOMETIMES CAME TO HIS DEFENSE

WHEN DRUNKS IN THE AUDIENCE
PICKED A FIGHT WITH HIM.

"THERE AIN'T NOBODY
IN THIS HERE WORLD

"THAT I'D RATHER HAVE
STANDIN' NEXT TO ME

IN A BEER JOINT BRAWL,"
HANK SAID,

"THAN MY MAW WITH
A BROKEN BOTTLE IN HER HAND."

BUT BY 1942,
HIS OWN BINGE DRINKING
HAD BECOME SUCH A PROBLEM,

THE MONTGOMERY STATION
FIRED HIM.

A YEAR LATER, WORKING IN
A MEDICINE SHOW
IN BRUNDIDGE, ALABAMA,

HE MET A PRETTY
DRUGSTORE CLERK

WHO TURNED OUT
TO POSSESS THE SAME

STEELY DETERMINATION
AS HIS MOTHER.

AUDREY MAE SHEPPARD WAS STILL
TECHNICALLY MARRIED
TO ANOTHER MAN

WHO HAD ABANDONED HER
AND HER YOUNG DAUGHTER,

BUT SHE WAS IRRESISTIBLY
DRAWN TO WILLIAMS.

"I KNEW WHAT I WANTED AND I
WENT AFTER IT," SHE RECALLED.

"HE WAS LUCKY WITH
A GOD-GIVEN TALENT,

AND I WAS LUCKY
WITH A FEW BRAINS."

HIS BACK PROBLEMS KEPT HIM
OUT OF WORLD WAR II.

FOR A WHILE, HE AND AUDREY
WORKED AT

THE ALABAMA DRY DOCK
AND SHIPBUILDING COMPANY
IN MOBILE,

UNTIL SHE PUSHED HIM TO GO BACK
TO MONTGOMERY AND HIS MUSIC.

MAN: MY MOTHER SAID,

"LOOK, YOU'RE GOOD.

YOUR MUSIC IS GOOD.
YOUR SONGS ARE GOOD."

AND YOU TAKE OUT MAMA, AND THEN
MAYBE THE GUY SITS DOWN THERE

AND WELDS SHIPS TOGETHER
AND THEN GOES TO THE NEXT JOB.

MAYBE IF THERE'S NO AUDREY,
THERE'S NO HANK.

NARRATOR: BY THE WAR'S END,
THEY WERE MARRIED.

ONE NIGHT IN MONTGOMERY,
HE WAS THE OPENING ACT

FOR ONE OF HIS IDOLS,
ERNEST TUBB.

WILLIAMS TOLD HIM THAT
HE HAD TRIED IMITATING

TUBB'S HONKY-TONK STYLE,

AND HE HAD TRIED IMITATING

ROY ACUFF'S MORE
EMOTIONAL DELIVERY,

BUT HAD FINALLY FOUND HIS
OWN VOICE SOMEWHERE IN BETWEEN.

IN 1946, HE AND AUDREY
BOARDED A TRAIN FOR NASHVILLE,

WHERE HE HOPED TO MAKE
A NAME FOR HIMSELF.

THERE, HE MET WITH THE RENOWNED
SONGWRITER FRED ROSE,

WHO RAN ACUFF-ROSE PUBLISHING,

ONE OF THE FIRST
MUSIC PUBLISHERS IN TOWN.

ROSE TOOK AN IMMEDIATE LIKING
TO WILLIAMS

AND HELPED HIM GET
A RECORDING DEAL OF HIS OWN,

BEFORE HE AND AUDREY

RETURNED HOME TO MONTGOMERY.

AMONG THE SONGS
WILLIAMS RECORDED

WAS ONE THAT SHOWED
THE INFLUENCE OF

RUFUS "TEE-TOT" PAYNE.

IT WAS CALLED
"MOVE IT ON OVER."

WILLIAMS: â a ...SO,
MOVE IT ON OVER â a

MEN: â a MOVE IT
ON OVER â a

WILLIAMS: â a MOVE IT ON OVER

MEN: â a MOVE IT
ON OVER â a

WILLIAMS: â a MOVE OVER,
LITTLE DOG â a

â a 'CAUSE THE BIG DOG'S
MOVIN' IN... â a

NARRATOR: WHEN IT WAS RELEASED
IN JUNE OF 1947,

IT BECAME WILLIAMS' FIRST HIT.

WILLIAMS: â a ...MORE,
SO GET IT ON OVER â a

MEN: â a MOVE IT
ON OVER â a

WILLIAMS: â a SCOOT IT ON OVER

MEN: â a MOVE IT
ON OVER â a

WILLIAMS: â a MOVE OVER,
SKINNY DOG â a

â a 'CAUSE THE FAT DOG'S
MOVIN' IN â a

WILLIAMS, JR.: THEY SAY
"ROCK AROUND THE CLOCK"

IS THE FIRST ROCK SONG.

I DON'T AGREE WITH THAT.

"ROCK AROUND THE CLOCK"
IS A DIRECT STEAL

OF "MOVE IT ON OVER."

LISTEN TO THEM,
COMPARE THEM SOMETIME.

â   CAME IN LAST NIGHT
AT A HALF PAST--DA, DA, DA, DA â  

â   I'M GOING TO ROCK AROUND
THE CLOCK, MOVE IT ON OVER â  

WILLIAMS: â   ...SIDE'S MINE,
SO, SHOVE IT ON OVER â  

MEN: â   MOVE IT
ON OVER â  

WILLIAMS: â   SWEEP IT ON OVER

MEN: â   MOVE IT
ON OVER â  

WILLIAMS: â   MOVE OVER,
COLD DOG â  

â   'CAUSE A HOT DOG'S
MOVIN' IN â  

MAN: IT'S WSM,
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE,

THE BROADCASTING SERVICE OF

THE NATIONAL LIFE AND ACCIDENT
INSURANCE COMPANY,

PRESENTING THE GRAND OLE OPRY.

LET HER GO, BOYS.

â  

ROY ACUFF: â   FROM THE GREAT
ATLANTIC OCEAN TO... â  

MAN: NATIONAL LIFE
AND ACCIDENT INSURANCE COMPANY

WOULD TELL THEIR AGENTS TO WALK
THROUGH NEIGHBORHOODS
ON A SATURDAY NIGHT,

AND IF THE DOOR WAS OPEN,
THE WINDOW WAS UP,

AND THEY HEARD
THE GRAND OLE OPRY

COMING THROUGH EITHER
THE SCREEN DOOR OR THE WINDOW,

OUT IN THE STREET,
THEY MADE A NOTE.

THEY WROTE DOWN THE ADDRESS.

THEY WERE BACK IN THERE
INTO THAT NEIGHBORHOOD
ON MONDAY MORNING.

[KNOCKING ON DOOR]

MAN 2: I'D KNOCK ON THE DOOR
AND I'D INTRODUCE MYSELF.

I'D SAY, "I'M BUD WENDELL
AND I'M WITH

"THE NATIONAL LIFE AND ACCIDENT
INSURANCE COMPANY OF NASHVILLE.

"WE OWN WSM
AND THE GRAND OLE OPRY.

"PERHAPS YOU'VE HEARD OF
THE GRAND OLE OPRY?

"AND I HAVE A LITTLE GIFT HERE
I'D LIKE TO GIVE YOU.

MAY I STEP IN?"

AND THEY WOULD HAVE
CANVASSING ITEMS,

SOUVENIRS FROM THE GRAND OLE
OPRY, THESE AGENTS.

THEY WOULD HAVE GRAND OLE OPRY,
WSM CALENDARS.

THEY WOULD HAVE
RULERS, FLY SWATTERS,

JUST LITTLE THINGS THAT
THEY COULD USE TO ENTICE,

AND THEN THEY WOULD GET AROUND
TO TALKING ABOUT INSURANCE.

WENDELL: A LOT
OF THEIR QUESTIONS

HAD TO DO WITH THE ARTISTS.

"DO YOU KNOW ROY ACUFF?"

OR "DO YOU KNOW MINNIE PEARL?"

OR "WE LISTENED TO THE OPRY
LAST SATURDAY NIGHT

AND WE SURE LOVED THE SONG
THAT, UH, THAT ACUFF DID."

OR THAT SORT OF THING.

BUT I'D TRY TO GET THEM ONTO
THE SUBJECT OF LIFE INSURANCE.

THAT'S WHY I'M THERE.
I'M NOT THERE TO TELL HIM

THE LIFE STORY OF
ANY OF THE OPRY STARS.

BUT THE CONNECTION
WITH THE OPRY

WAS A TREMENDOUS DOOR OPENER.

NARRATOR: HUNDREDS OF
RADIO STATIONS ACROSS THE NATION

NOW BROADCAST WEEKLY
BARN DANCE PROGRAMS--

FROM PHILADELPHIA'S
HAYLOFT HOEDOWN

TO THE CAROLINA HAYRIDE
IN CHARLOTTE,

FROM THE OZARK JUBILEE
IN SPRINGFIELD, MISSOURI

TO DALLAS' BIG D JAMBOREE

AND CALIFORNIA'S
HOLLYWOOD BARN DANCE.

BUT THE LINE-UP OF STARS
AT NASHVILLE'S GRAND OLE OPRY

WAS UNEQUALED, AND WSM's
POWERFUL 50,000-WATT SIGNAL

COULD BEAM THE SHOW
TO BOTH COASTS

FROM THE RYMAN AUDITORIUM,

THE MOTHER CHURCH
OF COUNTRY MUSIC.

MAN: OH, MY GOODNESS,
FOR A COUNTRY MUSICIAN

TO BE ASKED TO JOIN THE OPRY,

THAT'S KIND OF LIKE
SAYING YOU WANT TO GO

TO HEAVEN WHEN YOU DIE.
[LAUGHS]

IT'S THE TOP OF THE LADDER,
IT'S THE ULTIMATE.

DO YOU WANT TO PLAY FIRST BASE
FOR THE NEW YORK YANKEES?

DO YOU WANT TO PITCH
FOR THE BOSTON RED SOX?

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO?

AND TO SAY THAT ABOUT...
DO YOU WANT TO BE

A MEMBER OF THE GRAND OLE OPRY,

THAT'S JUST ABOUT
AS GOOD A QUESTION

AS ANYBODY COULD EVER ASK.

AND THERE'S ONLY ONE ANSWER.
YEAH! [LAUGHS]

EDDY ARNOLD: â„¢ I'M SENDING YOU
A BIG BOUQUET OF ROSES â„¢

MAN: HE SPREAD THE WORD.

HE WAS OUR FIRST POP CROSSOVER.

PEOPLE BOUGHT
EDDY ARNOLD RECORDS

WHO WOULDN'T BUY

COUNTRY RECORDS

BECAUSE, AS EDDY SAID,
HE WAS SMOOTH.

ARNOLD: â„¤ TEARS WILL FALL

NARRATOR: IN OCTOBER 1947,
NOT LONG AFTER ERNEST TUBB

HAD PERFORMED AT CARNEGIE HALL,

ANOTHER STAR OF
THE GRAND OLE OPRY

APPEARED IN ANOTHER
UNLIKELY VENUE

FOR A HILLBILLY SINGER.

EDDY ARNOLD FILLED
WASHINGTON, D.C.'s

CONSTITUTION HALL
FOR TWO STRAIGHT NIGHTS.

ARNOLD: â„¤ SO, I'M SENDING YOU
A BIG BOUQUET OF ROSES â„¤

NARRATOR: HIS MUSIC, PROMINENTLY
FEATURING A STEEL GUITAR,

WAS UNMISTAKABLY COUNTRY.

BUT HE WAS JUST AS UNMISTAKABLY

NOT ANOTHER ERNEST TUBB

OR THE UP-AND-COMING
HANK WILLIAMS.

MAN: MY GRANDFATHER
WAS A ROMANTIC.

AND SO, HE REALLY ALWAYS
FOCUSED IN ON LOVE SONGS.

THEY WEREN'T ABOUT, YOU KNOW,
DRINKING OR CHEATING,

OR ANYTHING
LIKE THAT, NECESSARILY.

THEY WERE ABOUT LOVE.

NARRATOR: RICHARD EDWARD ARNOLD

WAS BORN ON A FARM NEAR
HENDERSON, TENNESSEE IN 1918,

THE YOUNGEST OF 16 CHILDREN.

ON HIS 11th BIRTHDAY,
HIS FATHER DIED,

SO DEEPLY IN DEBT
THE FAMILY FARM AND IMPLEMENTS

HAD TO BE AUCTIONED OFF,

AND THE ARNOLDS
FOUND THEMSELVES AS TENANTS

WORKING ON WHAT HAD BEEN
THEIR OWN LAND.

EDDY DECIDED SINGING
MIGHT BE HIS WAY OUT.

IN 1938, HE AND A FRIEND
LANDED A JOB

AT A ST. LOUIS RADIO STATION,

BILLED AS THE TENNESSEE
HARMONY LADS.

BUT ARNOLD DREAMED
OF BIGGER THINGS.

"I KNEW WHERE I WANTED
TO GO," HE SAID,

"BECAUSE I COULDN'T GO BACK."

HIS BIG BREAK CAME IN 1940,

WHEN PEE WEE KING INVITED HIM
TO JOIN THE GOLDEN WEST COWBOYS

FOR A GUARANTEE OF \$15 A WEEK.

BILLED AS
"SMILIN' EDDY ARNOLD,"

HE WOULD SING BALLADS,

SELL PEE WEE'S SONGBOOKS
AT INTERMISSION,

AND FOR EXTRA MONEY
SWEEP OUT THE AUDITORIUM

AFTER EACH PERFORMANCE.

IN 1943,
HE WENT OUT ON HIS OWN,

SINGING ON THE OPRY
AS THE TENNESSEE PLOWBOY

AND DOING A MORNING SHOW ON WSM
RIGHT AFTER ERNEST TUBB'S.

[ARNOLD YODELING]

NARRATOR: PEOPLE RESPONDED
TO HIS CLEAN-CUT IMAGE--

NEATLY PRESSED SLACKS;
A CRISP, WHITE SHIRT;

A HANDSOME, SQUARE-JAWED FACE;

SOMETIMES WITH A DAPPER
RANCHER'S HAT ON HIS HEAD.

THEY LOVED HIS MUSIC EVEN MORE,

A MELLOW VOICE THAT COULD
NOT ONLY CROON LOVE BALLADS,

BUT ALSO BREAK INTO
A SMOOTH YODEL

ON A FAVORITE UPBEAT SONG,
"CATTLE CALL."

[ARNOLD YODELING]

NARRATOR: HE WAS MANAGED NOW
BY THOMAS A. PARKER,

A FORMER CARNIVAL PROMOTER
WITH A FLAIR FOR PUBLICITY

WHO INSISTED ON BEING CALLED
COLONEL PARKER.

TO ATTRACT ATTENTION
TO HIS STAR ON THE ROAD,

PARKER OFTEN DEMANDED
A POLICE ESCORT INTO TOWN,

OR EVEN WHEN THEY
WENT OUT FOR A HAMBURGER.

AT THE END OF 1947,
ARNOLD'S SONG

"I'LL HOLD YOU IN MY HEART"
REACHED NUMBER ONE

ON BILLBOARD'S RANKING
OF HILLBILLY MUSIC.

IT WOULD STAY THERE
FOR AN UNPRECEDENTED 21 WEEKS,

AND BE FOLLOWED BY 4 OTHERS.

OF THE 6 NUMBER-ONE
COUNTRY SONGS IN 1948,

EDDY ARNOLD HAD 5 OF THEM.

ARNOLD: â„“ WAIT FOR ME

STUART: THE FIRST STAR THAT I
EVER SAW IN MY LIFE IN PERSON

WAS BILL MONROE.

HE COULD DO THINGS THAT
NOBODY ELSE IN COUNTRY MUSIC

COULD DO, YOU KNOW.
[PLAYING MANDOLIN]

HE COULD DO THAT.

AND HE REQUIRED
EVERYBODY AROUND HIM

TO DO THAT, AT THAT LEVEL, TOO.

MAN: IN MUSIC HISTORY,
BILL MONROE, TO ME,

HE'S AS IMPORTANT
AS CHARLIE PARKER.

I MEAN, YOU THINK ABOUT IT,
HOW MANY PEOPLE

HAVE A GENRE OF MUSIC
THAT THEY STARTED,

THAT THEY CAN SAY,
"THIS MAN RIGHT HERE

STARTED A WHOLE NEW
GENRE OF MUSIC."

BILL MONROE DID THAT.

â„“

BILL MONROE AND HIS BLUE GRASS
BOYS: â„“ IT'S MIGHTY DARK

â„“ FOR ME TO TRAVEL, FOR MY...

MAN: I THINK
THERE ARE COSMIC FORCES

BY WAY OF HUMAN BEINGS
THAT HIT THE PLANET.

BILL MONROE WAS ONE.

THERE'S JUST ONE BILL MONROE.

UH, THERE'S JUST
ONE MARK TWAIN.

YOU KNOW, THERE'S JUST
ONE EINSTEIN, ONE HEMINGWAY.

SKAGGS: WHEN BILL
PUT HIS BAND TOGETHER

AND CAME TO NASHVILLE IN 1939

AND GOT TO BE A MEMBER
OF THE GRAND OLE OPRY,

HIS MUSIC STARTED CHANGING.

AND HE STARTED LOOKING
FOR A DIFFERENT SOUND.

I THINK IN HIS BRAIN
HE WAS HEARING

SOMETHING THAT WAS UNIQUE,

BUT HE DIDN'T KNOW
EXACTLY WHAT IT WAS.

NARRATOR: BILL MONROE
WAS TEMPERAMENTAL,

QUICK TO TAKE OFFENSE,
AND A PERFECTIONIST,

NEVER ENTIRELY SATISFIED
WITH THE MUSIC

HE HAD BEEN PLAYING
WITH THE BLUE GRASS BOYS,

NAMED IN HONOR OF HIS
HOME STATE OF KENTUCKY.

IN LATE 1945, HE BEGAN
RECONFIGURING THE BAND,

BRINGING IN CHUBBY WISE,
WHO HAD POPULARIZED

"ORANGE BLOSSOM SPECIAL,"
ON THE FIDDLE;

CEDRIC RAINWATER ON BASS;

LESTER FLATT, FROM
DUNCAN'S CHAPEL, TENNESSEE,

SINGING LEAD
AND PLAYING GUITAR.

AND TO REPLACE DAVE
"STRINGBEAN" AKEMAN ON BANJO,

MONROE HIRED
A QUIET 21-YEAR-OLD

FROM FLINT HILL, NORTH CAROLINA

NAMED EARL SCRUGGS.

SCRUGGS HAD BEEN PLAYING BANJO
SINCE AGE 4,

AND AS A BOY STARTED
EXPERIMENTING WITH

A 3-FINGERED TECHNIQUE POPULAR
IN NORTH CAROLINA'S PIEDMONT.

â™a

AFTER WORKING IN A TEXTILE MILL

TO SUPPORT HIS WIDOWED MOTHER
DURING THE WAR,

SCRUGGS JOINED A BAND
IN KNOXVILLE

AND FURTHER REFINED HIS
PROPULSIVE, ROLLING STYLE,

SO DIFFERENT FROM
THE "CLAWHAMMER" TECHNIQUE

USED BY STRINGBEAN
AND THE OPRY'S UNCLE DAVE MACON,

BOTH OF THEM AS MUCH COMEDIANS

AS BANJO PLAYERS.

SCRUGGS WAS DEFINITELY
NOT A COMEDIAN.

ALMOST PAINFULLY SHY,
HE OVERCAME HIS STAGE FRIGHT

BY CONCENTRATING ON MAKING
HIS LIGHTNING-LIKE FINGER WORK

APPEAR EFFORTLESS.

WHEN EARL WALKED UP
ANYWHERE NEAR THAT MIC,

HE WAS PICKING
SO HARD AND DEFINITE

THAT HIS EXCITEMENT
WOULD PENETRATE THE AUDIENCE.

IT WOULD JUST MAKE THEM NUTS.

HE BROUGHT TO IT THE SAME THING
THAT EDDIE VAN HALEN

BROUGHT TO ROCK AND ROLL
SHREDDING GUITAR.

[IMITATING PLAYING GUITAR]
IT WAS SO FAST.

IT WAS WHAT EXCITED PEOPLE.

STUBBS: HE WAS
A 21-YEAR-OLD KID,

PLAYING THE BANJO IN A WAY THAT
NO ONE HAD EVER HEARD BEFORE.

HE WASN'T THE FIRST PERSON
TO PLAY WITH A 3-FINGER ROLL,

BUT HE WAS THE FIRST PERSON
WHO CAME TO NASHVILLE WITH IT.

EARL SCRUGGS IS ONE OF THE
SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT MUSICIANS,

NOT JUST IN THE HISTORY
OF COUNTRY MUSIC,

NOT JUST AS AN ARCHITECT OF
WHAT WE KNOW AS BLUEGRASS MUSIC,

BUT HE'S ONE OF THE SINGLE MOST

IMPORTANT INSTRUMENTALISTS

IN THE HISTORY OF
THE MUSIC OF THE WORLD.

SKAGGS: WHEN BILL HEARD EARL
PLAY THAT FIERY 3-FINGERED ROLL,

IT WAS THE LAST COG THAT
THE MACHINE NEEDED TO RUN ON

AND REALLY MAKE THE ENGINE GO.

NARRATOR: MONROE'S NEW SOUND
NOW FEATURED

INDIVIDUAL SOLO BREAKS
IN EACH SONG--

WISE'S FURIOUS FIDDLE,
MONROE'S EXTRAORDINARY MANDOLIN,

AND SCRUGGS' SYNCOPATED BANJO,

WITH FLATT KEEPING PACE
ON HIS GUITAR

AND PROVIDING
A STRONG VOCAL LEAD

WHILE MONROE ADDED HIS OWN
HIGH TENOR HARMONY.

BILL MONROE
AND HIS BLUE GRASS BOYS:
â€œTHERE'S FOLKS BUILDING HOMES

â€œAS SWEET AS CAN BE...

SKAGGS: IN A COUNTRY BAND,
THE MUSIC IS BUILT

AROUND THE LEAD SINGER.

THEN YOU HAVE THE BAND
BACK BEHIND IT.

IN A BLUEGRASS BAND,
IT'S THE BAND.

THE FIDDLE PLAYER'S AS IMPORTANT
AS THE MANDOLIN PLAYER.

DON'T TELL MR. MONROE THAT.

BUT THE BANJO PLAYER
IS EQUALLY AS IMPORTANT

AS THE MANDOLIN PLAYER.

DON'T TELL MR. MONROE THAT.

BUT I'M TELLING YOU,
IT'S A BAND SOUND.

BILL MONROE, HE NEVER
MADE IT ABOUT HIM.

BILL MONROE
AND HIS BLUE GRASS BOYS:
â„“ FOR ME, A MANSION FOR ME

â„“ A MANSION FOR ME...

McEUEN: I THINK THAT WHEN MONROE
HAD LESTER AND EARL WITH HIM,

IT BROUGHT TOGETHER
THESE ELEMENTS OF GREAT RHYTHM,

HARD-DRIVING, FAST, RAPID
EIGHTH NOTES THAT WERE CRAZY.

GREAT FIDDLE,
MONROE'S RHYTHM CHUNKS,

HIS HIGH VOICE, A GREAT HARMONY,
AND STORIES ABOUT DEAD PEOPLE.

NARRATOR: THANKS TO THEIR
GRAND OLE OPRY BROADCASTS

AND MONROE'S RELENTLESS SCHEDULE
OF TOURING THROUGHOUT THE SOUTH,

THE BAND'S STYLE BEGAN
INFLUENCING OTHER STRING BANDS.

BILL MONROE
AND HIS BLUE GRASS BOYS:
â„“ LORD JESUS IS BUILDING

â„“ A MANSION FOR ME

NARRATOR:
IN SOUTHWESTERN VIRGINIA,
THE STANLEY BROTHERS,

RALPH AND CARTER, WERE PAYING
PARTICULAR ATTENTION.

THEY HAD BEEN RAISED IN
THE PRIMITIVE BAPTIST CHURCH,

WHERE ENTIRE CONGREGATIONS
SANG HYMNS A CAPPELLA,

LED BY A CHURCH ELDER
LIKE THEIR FATHER.

ONE OF RALPH STANLEY'S
EARLIEST MEMORIES
WAS HEARING HIS FATHER'S VOICE

OUTSIDE THEIR HOME
AS THE DAY ENDED.

MAN: UH, LATE OF THE EVENING,
OR JUST BEFORE BEDTIME, WHY,

HE'D BE OUT
WALKING AROUND SOMEWHERE

AND SINGING THE OLD SONGS
BY HIMSELF.

â€œ I AM A MAN
OF CONSTANT SORROW â€œ

â€œ I'VE SEEN TROUBLE
ALL MY DAY â€œ

â€œ I BID FAREWELL
TO OLD KENTUCKY â€œ

â€œ THE STATE WHERE I WAS
BORNED AND RAISED â€œ

THAT'S THE WAY
I LEARNED TO SING.

NARRATOR: THEIR MOTHER
LOVED THE BANJO,

USING THE OLD
CLAWHAMMER STYLE,

AND WHEN YOUNG RALPH
EXPRESSED AN INTEREST

IN LEARNING TO PLAY IT,

SHE TOLD HIM THAT FOR
AN UPCOMING PRESENT FROM HER,

HE HAD A CHOICE TO MAKE.

STANLEY: WELL, IT WAS
A BANJO OR A PIG.

I WAS INTERESTED IN HOGS,
YOU KNOW, AT THAT TIME.

MY AUNT OWNED THEM
AND SHE WANTED

\$5.00 APIECE FOR
EITHER ONE OF THEM.

WELL, MY MOTHER TOLD ME,
SHE SAID,

"NOW, ONE OF THEM
IS ALL I CAN AFFORD.

SO, YOU PICK THE BANJO
OR THE PIG."

SO, I PICKED THE BANJO.

THE STANLEY BROTHERS:
â€œ COME, LITTLE GIRL,
LET'S GO GET MARRIED... â€œ

NARRATOR: RALPH'S BROTHER CARTER
PICKED UP THE GUITAR,

AND THE STANLEY BROTHERS
SOON BEGAN PERFORMING LOCALLY.

THE STANLEY BROTHERS:
â€œ AT MY WEDDING, MY LITTLE WIFE
YOU'LL BE â€œ

â€œ OH, WILLIE, DEAR,
LET'S BOTH CONSIDER â€œ

â€œ WE'RE BOTH TOO YOUNG
TO BE MARRIED NOW...â€œ

MAN: RALPH'S VOICE SOUNDED
LIKE IT HAD COAL DUST IN IT

IN A REALLY COOL WAY, AND I LOVE
THAT BROTHER HARMONY.

I'VE ALWAYS BEEN A NUT
FOR THAT BROTHER HARMONY

THAT RALPH AND CARTER
HAD TOGETHER.

NARRATOR: AFTER SERVING
IN THE WAR,

THEY CAME HOME AND FORMED
THE CLINCH MOUNTAIN BOYS,

BECAME REGULARS
ON WCYB IN BRISTOL,

AND WENT TO SEE THE MUSICIANS
THEY ADMIRED THE MOST--

BILL MONROE AND HIS
BLUE GRASS BOYS.

RALPH WATCHED
EARL SCRUGGS INTENTLY.

STANLEY: WELL, I SAID,
I WILL HAVE TO TRY
TO GET THAT STYLE MYSELF.

SO, I STARTED WORKING ON IT.
HEH HEH.

â„“a

THE STANLEY BROTHERS:
â„“a O RUN O MOLLY RUN

â„“a RUN O MOLLY RUN,
TENBROOK'S GONNA BEAT YOU â„“a

â„“a TO THE BRIGHT SHINING SUN

â„“a BRIGHT SHINING SUN, O LORD,
THE BRIGHT SHINING SUN... â„“a

MAN: THE STANLEYS
WERE JUST STARTING

AND THEY WERE IDOLIZING BILL.

THEY'D LISTEN TO HIM
ON SATURDAY NIGHT

AND ON THEIR NOON TIME SHOW,
ON BRISTOL,

THEY'D DO, VERBATIM,
EVERYTHING HE'D DONE.

IT WAS A TRIBUTE.

BUT IT TICKED BILL OFF BECAUSE

THEY WERE COPYING HIM,
YOU SEE?

STANLEY: WE SUNG
THE SAME WAY BILL DID,

ONLY IT WAS A DIFFERENT SOUND.

STANLEY SOUND.

NARRATOR: WHEN THE STANLEYS
RELEASED A SONG OF HIS,

"MOLLY AND TENBROOK,"
MONROE WAS FURIOUS.

HE HAD RECORDED THE SAME TUNE
A YEAR EARLIER,

BUT HIS LABEL, COLUMBIA,
HAD NOT RELEASED IT YET.

THEN COLUMBIA SIGNED
THE STANLEY BROTHERS;

MONROE RETALIATED BY
SWITCHING TO DECCA RECORDS.

THERE WERE MORE AGGRAVATIONS.

IN 1948, TWO OF MONROE'S STARS,
LESTER FLATT AND EARL SCRUGGS,

FRUSTRATED BY HOW LITTLE MONEY
THEY WERE MAKING,

DECIDED TO STRIKE OUT
ON THEIR OWN.

THEY EVENTUALLY FORMED
THEIR OWN BAND,

THE FOGGY MOUNTAIN BOYS.

ONCE AGAIN,
MONROE WAS INCENSED.

HE CONVINCED THE OPRY
NOT TO ALLOW FLATT AND SCRUGGS

TO PERFORM THERE FOR YEARS.

WISEMAN: HE KEPT THEM OFF OF
THE OPRY FOR A LONG TIME.

THAT'S HOW POSSESSIVE HE WAS.

SO, THE WAY THAT
EVERYBODY DEALT WITH IT

IS NOBODY SPOKE
FOR LIKE 25 YEARS.

THEY PLAYED AT
THE GRAND OLE OPRY,

THEY'D WORK AROUND EACH OTHER
AND, YOU KNOW,

EXIST IN THE SAME INDUSTRY,
BUT NOBODY SPOKE.

WOMAN: BILL TOLD ME HE'D
BE BACKSTAGE AT THE OPRY

AND THEY'D BE STANDING THERE
AND HE'D JUST

WALK ON RIGHT ON INTO THEM,
LIKE THEY WASN'T EVEN THERE.

I SAID, "WOULDN'T YOU
SAY NOTHING?"

HE SAID, "NO."

I SAID, "WOULD YOU NOT EVEN
SAY, 'EXCUSE ME'?"

AND HE SAID, "NO."

WELL, I WOULD LAUGH WHEN HE'D
TELL ME SOMETHING LIKE THAT

'CAUSE I THOUGHT IT WAS
SO IMMATURE AND SILLY,

BUT I'D...ANYWAY,
I THOUGHT IT WAS FUNNY.

NOBODY CAN HOLD A GRUDGE
LIKE HILLBILLIES.

[LAUGHS]
I CAN ATTEST TO THAT.

NARRATOR: THEN, DURING A VISIT
TO FLATT AND SCRUGGS'

STATION IN BRISTOL,
MONROE STOLE

THEIR SINGER, MAC WISEMAN.

WISEMAN: WELL, RIGHT ON THE AIR,
MONROE SAID TO ME,

"IF YOU EVER WANT A JOB ON
THE OPRY, JUST CALL ME."

WELL, IT MADE FLATT
MIGHTY, MIGHTY ANGRY. [LAUGHS]

NARRATOR: A LITTLE LATER,
FLATT AND SCRUGGS CAME OUT WITH

AN INSTRUMENTAL SONG
EARL HAD WRITTEN,

"FOGGY MOUNTAIN BREAKDOWN,"
NAMED FOR THE NEW BAND.

EXCEPT FOR A FEW CHANGES,
IT CLOSELY RESEMBLED

A TUNE HE HAD WORKED ON
WITH MONROE CALLED

"BLUEGRASS BREAKDOWN."

STUART: "BLUEGRASS BREAKDOWN."

[PLAYING SONG ON MANDOLIN]

WELL, "FOGGY MOUNTAIN
BREAKDOWN,"

WHEN EARL TOOK IT OUT
ON THEIR OWN, IT WAS LIKE...

[PLAYING]

ONE CHORD CHANGE.

[PLAYING]

SO...

âa

âa

NARRATOR: IN THE MIDST
OF ALL THE FEUDING,

AUDIENCE MEMBERS AT
FLATT AND SCRUGGS CONCERTS

WOULD WANT TO REQUEST
A BILL MONROE TUNE

DATING FROM THE TIME
THEY WERE STILL A PART

OF THE BLUE GRASS BOYS.

BUT AS EVERETT LILLY, A MEMBER
OF THE FOGGY MOUNTAINS BOYS,

RECALLED, THE FANS WERE AFRAID
EVEN TO MENTION BILL MONROE.

MAN: THE PUBLIC BEGAN TO SAY,
"BOYS, WOULD YOU PLEASE DO

ONE OF THEM OLD BLUE GRASS TUNES
LIKE YOU USED TO DO?"

THEY KNEW ME AND LESTER COULD

SING THEM DUETS
LIKE HIM AND BILL.

THEY'D SAY, "WOULD YOU PLEASE
DO AN OLD BLUEGRASS TUNE?"

THE PUBLIC NAMED
BLUEGRASS MUSIC...

THROUGH THE FEAR TO SPEAK
BILL MONROE'S NAME TO 'EM.

â  a

â  a

MADDOX BROTHERS AND ROSE:
â  a GOOD MORNING, CAPTAIN

â  a HOWDY, GAL

â  a GOOD MORNING, SON

â  a I'M A-SHINING

â  a DO YOU NEED ANOTHER
MULE SKINNER... â  a

NARRATOR: IN 1948,
AN OLD JIMMIE RODGERS SONG

GOT A NEW LEASE ON LIFE.

RODGERS, COUNTRY MUSIC'S
FIRST SUPERSTAR,

ORIGINALLY RECORDED
"MULE SKINNER BLUES"

IN THE 1920s
WITH JUST HIS GUITAR.

BILL MONROE HAD MADE

HIS GRAND OLE OPRY DEBUT

WITH A STUNNINGLY ENERGETIC
REINTERPRETATION OF IT

WITH THE BLUE GRASS BOYS
BACK IN 1939.

NOW AN ELECTRIFIED BAND OUT IN
CALIFORNIA'S CENTRAL VALLEY

GAVE IT A HONKY-TONK BOUNCE.

IT WAS THE MADDOX BROTHERS
AND ROSE.

THEY HAD ARRIVED IN CALIFORNIA

IN THE DEPTHS OF
THE GREAT DEPRESSION,

RIDING FREIGHT TRAINS
FROM ALABAMA

AND BARELY SURVIVING
AS MIGRANT FARM WORKERS

BEFORE TAKING UP INSTRUMENTS

AND PUTTING THEIR
YOUNG SISTER ROSE

IN FRONT OF A MICROPHONE.

THEY WORKED THE BARS
AND DANCE HALLS

OF THE CENTRAL VALLEY
PLAYING HILLBILLY MUSIC

FOR OTHERS LIKE THEM,
ECONOMIC REFUGEES

DENIGRATED AS OKIES.

WHEN HER BROTHERS
WENT OFF TO WAR,

ROSE HAD APPROACHED
THE KING OF WESTERN SWING,

BOB WILLS, FOR A JOB.

MAN: AND BOB WILLS
ALREADY HAD A GIRL SINGER,

SO HE WASN'T INTERESTED

IN USING ROSE IN HIS BAND.

AND THE WAY I HEARD IT,
THAT ROSE SAID,

"WELL, IF YOU DON'T USE ME,
YOU'RE GOING TO BE SORRY

"BECAUSE WHEN
MY BROTHERS GET HOME,

WE'RE GOING TO PUT YOU
OUT OF BUSINESS." [LAUGHS]

LATER ON, I HEARD
THAT BOB WILLS

WAS TELLING THAT STORY
TO SOMEBODY AND HE SAID,

"YOU KNOW, THEY ALMOST DID
PUT US OUT OF BUSINESS."

NARRATOR: LULA MADDOX,
THE FAMILY Matriarch

AND DRIVING FORCE
BEHIND THE BAND,

OUTFITTED HER CHILDREN
IN FLAMBOYANT WESTERN CLOTHES

MADE BY NATHAN TURK,

A POLISH-BORN TAILOR
IN HOLLYWOOD,

WHO HAD DESIGNED COSTUMES
FOR MOVIE COWBOYS.

NO ONE HAD EVER SEEN OR HEARD
ANYTHING QUITE LIKE IT BEFORE--

SHOWS THAT INCLUDED
SLAPSTICK HUMOR,

SHOUTS AND HOLLERS,
SONGS THAT MIXED

HONKY-TONK AND BOOGIE WOOGIE
AND THE BLUES,

AN ELECTRIFIED HILLBILLY SOUND
IN OVERDRIVE.

MADDOX BROTHERS AND ROSE:

â€œSALLY, LET YOUR BANGS
HANG DOWNâ€œ

STUART: THE WORLD'S MOST
COLORFUL HILLBILLY BAND.

THEY UNDERSTOOD
THE ART OF SHOWMANSHIP.

WEARING THESE
MATCHING COSTUMES,

FANCY COWBOY CLOTHES
LIKE THEY'D SEEN

THE COWBOY STARS WEAR,

MADE BY MR. NATHAN TURK,

DRIVING MATCHING CADILLACS
INTO THESE TOWNS.

THEY WOULD BARNSTORM A PLACE.

THEY DIDN'T KNOW IT,
BUT THEY WERE ROCK STARS

AS WELL AS HILLBILLY STARS
AND COUNTRY STARS.

MAN: â€œTHAT'S FRIENDLY HENRY,
THE WORKING GIRL'S FRIENDâ€œ

â€œI WONDER IF SALLY'S
A WORKING GIRLâ€œ

[LAUGHTER]

ROSE: â€œHOWDY, BOYS

MAN: â€œNOW I'LL HAVE TO...

MAN: IT WAS LIKE A CIRCUS ACT.

THEY WERE COLORFUL.

THEY WERE FUNNY.

THEY WERE TALENTED.

SOMETIMES, YOU GO SOMEPLACE
AND YOU WONDER

IF YOU'RE AT
THE RIGHT PLACE OR NOT.

BUT WHEN YOU WENT TO

THE MADDOX BROTHERS AND ROSE,

YOU KNEW YOU'D COME
TO THE RIGHT SHOW.

YOU COULD NOT BE AT ONE OF
THEIR SHOWS AND NOT BE HAPPY.

YOU KNOW, IT--THEY
JUST WOULDN'T HAVE IT.

MADDOX BROTHERS AND ROSE:
â€¢ SALLY, LET YOUR BANGS
HANG DOWN â€¢

STUART: THEY WERE THE PRELUDE
TO ROCK AND ROLL.

THEY PUT THE BOOGIE
IN COUNTRY MUSIC.

[PLAYING MANDOLIN]

â€¢ WELL, ME AND MY BABY
WALKING DOWN THE STREET â€¢

â€¢ TELLING EVERYBODY BUT
THE CHIEF OF POLICE â€¢

â€¢ GOTTA STEP IT UP AND GO

â€¢ HEY-YO, STEP IT UP
AND GO, WHOO! â€¢

â€¢ CAN'T STAY, HONEY, BUT YOU
SURE GOTTA STEP IT UP AND GO â€¢

THE MADDOX BROTHERS AND ROSE.

MAN: LET'S STEP IT UP AND GO.

NARRATOR: BY THE LATE 1940s,
THE MADDOX BROTHERS AND ROSE

WERE THE HOTTEST
COUNTRY BAND IN CALIFORNIA.

15 YEARS EARLIER,
THEY HAD LIVED

IN A CONCRETE CULVERT
IN OAKLAND.

NOW THEY MOVED INTO
A LAVISH MANSION IN HOLLYWOOD.

HAGGARD: 1949.

I'D HAVE BEEN 12 YEARS OLD,
I GUESS,

AND, UH, I HAD AN OLDER BROTHER
WHO WAS 14 YEARS OLDER THAN ME.

AND HE AND HIS WIFE TOOK ME TO--

TO SEE THE MADDOX BROTHERS
AND ROSE,

BUT ALSO TO SEE
THEIR GUITAR PLAYER,

WHO WAS ROY NICHOLS.

SO, I WAS SEEING ONE OF MY
HEROES FOR THE FIRST TIME.

I REMEMBER MY BROTHER
MADE THE REMARK, HE SAID,

"HE DON'T HAVE TO PICK COTTON
OR GO TO SCHOOL, EITHER ONE."

I SAID, "I WANT HIS JOB."

MADDOX BROTHERS AND ROSE:
â   ...GOTTA [INDISTINCT]

â   I SWEAR I GOTTA
STEP IT UP AND GO â  

â   YEAH

MAN: â   WHEN I WAS
A LITTLE BOY... â  

NARRATOR: IN 1948,
THE GRAND OLE OPRY

WELCOMED A NEW SINGER TO
THE STAGE AT RYMAN AUDITORIUM.

MAN: â   I WOULD HAVE
TO BE RIGHT STILL â  

â   UNTIL THE WHOLE CROWD ATE

â   MY MAMA ALWAYS SAID TO ME,
"JIM, TAKE A TATER AND WAIT" â  

â   NOW, TATERS...

NARRATOR: FROM
THE COAL-MINING REGION

OF SOUTHERN WEST VIRGINIA,

THE OLDEST OF 13 CHILDREN,

JAMES CECIL DICKENS
WAS 28 YEARS OLD

AND HAD BEEN MOVING FROM ONE
LOCAL RADIO STATION TO ANOTHER,

LEARNING HOW TO
ENTERTAIN AUDIENCES

AND KEEP A SHOW'S
SPONSORS HAPPY

BY PERSUADING LISTENERS TO BUY
WHATEVER WAS BEING ADVERTISED.

STUBBS: THIS COULD BE
CLOVERINE SALVE;

IT COULD BE BABY CHICKS;
IT COULD BE LIVER PILLS;

IT COULD BE PRAYER CLOTHS;
RADIOACTIVE DIRT; ANYTHING.

THAT--AND FOR EVERY ORDER
THAT CAME IN,

THE ARTIST WOULD RECEIVE
A SMALL PERCENTAGE.

THEY WERE CALLED THE P.I. DEALS,
PER INQUIRY.

NARRATOR: NO ONE WAS
BETTER AT IT THAN DICKENS.

ONLY 4 FEET, 10 INCHES TALL,

HE TURNED HIS SHORT STATURE
INTO PART OF HIS ACT,

PROMOTING EVERYTHING FROM
FRUIT TREES TO KITCHEN UTENSILS

TO PATENT MEDICINE.

EARLY IN HIS CAREER,
HE WOULD STAND ON A CHAIR

TO SHARE THE MICROPHONE
WITH T. TEXAS TYLER,

AND GLADLY ADOPTED THE NICKNAME
TYLER GAVE HIM,

LITTLE JIMMY DICKENS.

MAN: AND HE WAS 6 FEET TWO
AND HERE I WAS

ABOUT 4-10, YOU KNOW.

AND WE MADE A GOOD LITTLE TEAM.

"HERE'S THE LITTLE MAN
THAT EVERY MOTHER IN AMERICA

WOULD LIKE TO CALL THEIR SON."

DICKENS: â„¤ WELL, I THOUGHT
THAT I'D STARVE TO DEATH â„¤

â„¤ BEFORE MY TIME...

NARRATOR: TO FURTHER
DISTINGUISH HIMSELF ON STAGE,

DICKENS WENT TO HOLLYWOOD
FOR FLASHIER CLOTHES.

HE FOUND THEM AT THE MAIN
COMPETITOR OF NATHAN TURK,

WHO WAS OUTFITTING
THE MADDOX BROTHERS AND ROSE.

DICKENS: â„¤ AN OLD COLD TATER
AND WAIT â„¤

NARRATOR: NUTYA KOTLYRENKO
HAD BEEN BORN

IN KIEV, IN THE UKRAINE,

BUT CHANGED HIS LAST NAME TO
COHN WHEN HE CAME TO AMERICA.

CHILDHOOD FRIENDS IN BROOKLYN,

HAVING TROUBLE
WITH HIS FIRST NAME,

CALLED HIM NUDIE INSTEAD.

NOW HE RAN A TAILOR SHOP
IN HOLLYWOOD.

LITTLE JIMMY DICKENS
WAS THE FIRST STAR

FROM THE GRAND OLE OPRY
TO APPEAR IN

WHAT BECAME KNOWN
AS NUDIE SUITS.

DICKENS: THE MAIN THING
IN COUNTRY MUSIC

IS TO SELL YOURSELF
TO THE AUDIENCE

OTHER THAN JUST
SINGIN' TO THEM.

'CAUSE IF I HAD TO DEPEND ON
MY SINGIN', I'D BE UP THE CREEK.

STUBBS: HE DIDN'T GO OUT
ONSTAGE TO GO OVER.

HE CAME OUT ONSTAGE
TO TAKE OVER.

AND HE DID EVERY TIME.

AND HE WOULD SAY, "YOU KNOW,
THEY MAY NOT KNOW WHO I AM NOW,

BUT WHEN I GET DONE WITH THEM,
THEY WILL."

HE WAS FEARLESS.

DICKENS: â„“ NOW, I'M
JUST A SIMPLE GUY â„“

â„“ BUT THERE'S ONE THING
SURE AS SHOOTIN'... â„“

NARRATOR: ONE OF LITTLE JIMMY'S
HITS, "COUNTRY BOY,"

CAME FROM AN UNLIKELY SOURCE.

BOUDLEAUX AND FELICE BRYANT
WERE HARDLY COUNTRY BUMPKINS.

SHE WAS A SICILIAN-AMERICAN
FROM MILWAUKEE

WHO LOVED WRITING
ROMANTIC POETRY.

HE WAS THE SON OF
A SMALL-TOWN GEORGIA LAWYER

AND HAD BEEN TRAINED AS
A CLASSICAL VIOLINIST.

MAN: MY FATHER WAS PLAYING AT 18
IN THE SYMPHONY IN ATLANTA.

PLAYING PAGANINI,
EVERYTHING ELSE,

BUT THAT DIDN'T PAY
FOR THE HABITS

AN 18-YEAR-OLD BOY MIGHT

WANT TO DEVELOP IF
HE HAD ANY MONEY.

AND SO, MY FATHER
TOOK OFF PLAYING

WITH SOME OF
THE STRING BAND GROUPS.

HE COULD MAKE 20 BUCKS A NIGHT,

AND YOU COULDN'T MAKE THAT
IN A WEEK DOING ANYTHING ELSE.

DICKENS: â„“ WHERE I COME FROM,
OPPORTUNITIES â„“

â„“ THEY NEVER WERE TOO GOOD...

NARRATOR: BOUDLEAUX
WAS PART OF A QUARTET

WORKING IN THE COCKTAIL LOUNGE
OF MILWAUKEE'S SCHROEDER HOTEL

WHEN HE BUMPED INTO FELICE.

BRYANT: AND MY MOTHER
WAS THE ELEVATOR OPERATOR.

SHE TOOK HIM DOWNSTAIRS,
BOUGHT HIM A DRINK,

AND THEN IMMEDIATELY TOLD HIM

THAT SHE HAD DREAMT OF HIM
ALL--ALL OF HER LIFE

AND THAT THEY
SHOULD BE MARRIED.

THEY WERE HITCHED VERY QUICKLY,

OR AT LEAST WERE DOING WHAT

HITCHED PEOPLE USUALLY DO
VERY QUICKLY.

DICKENS: â„¤ SUNDAY,
I'M A PLAIN, OLD... â„¤

NARRATOR: BUT THEY WOULD
STRUGGLE TO GET BY,

MOVING FROM TOWN TO TOWN
WITH THEIR TWO SMALL BOYS

IN A TRAILER THEY PULLED
BEHIND THEIR CAR.

MEANWHILE, BOUDLEAUX
BEGAN SETTING

SOME OF FELICE'S POEMS
TO MUSIC.

WHEN THE HEAD OF
ACUFF-ROSE PUBLISHING

HEARD THEIR SONG "COUNTRY BOY,"

HE PASSED IT ON
TO JIMMY DICKENS

AND URGED THE BRYANTS
TO MOVE TO NASHVILLE.

DICKENS: â„¤ OLD GRAY MULE WHEN
THE SUN COMES UP ON MONDAY â„¤

NARRATOR: LITTLE JIMMY DICKENS
WOULD RECORD

A NUMBER OF THEIR COMPOSITIONS,

INCLUDING A LOVE SONG FELICE
HAD WRITTEN FOR BOUDLEAUX

AS A BIRTHDAY PRESENT--
"WE COULD."

BRYANT: MY MOTHER ALWAYS SAID,
ABOUT LITTLE JIMMY DICKENS,

AND A LOT OF PEOPLE SAID THIS,

THAT HE COULD SING A BALLAD
BETTER THAN ANYONE.

â„¤ IF ANYONE COULD

FIND THE JOY â„“a

â„“a THAT TRUE LOVES
BRINGS A GIRL AND BOY â„“a

â„“a WE COULD,
WE COULD, YOU AND I â„“a

â„“a IF ANYONE COULD
EVER SAY â„“a

â„“a THAT THEIR TRUE LOVE
WAS HERE TO STAY â„“a

â„“a WE COULD,
WE COULD, YOU AND I... â„“a

BRYANT: HE WASN'T,
IN SOME WAYS,

EVERYONE'S FAVORITE SINGER,
BUT HE COULD SELL IT.

"TAKE ME AS I AM,
OR LET ME GO,"

HE WAS THE FIRST ARTIST
TO CUT THAT.

THAT WAS ONE OF MY PARENTS'.

AND IT'S BEEN CUT BY EVERYONE
FROM HIM TO BOB DYLAN.

AND, OF COURSE, "WE COULD,"

WHICH WAS A SONG
MY MOTHER HAD WRITTEN.

SHE USED TO CRY WHEN
SHE'D HEAR JIMMY SING IT

'CAUSE HE COULD EMOTE.

NARRATOR: IMPRESSED BY
THE NUMBER OF HITS
THEY WERE WRITING,

A NEW YORK PUBLISHER FLEW DOWN
TO TRY TO PERSUADE THE BRYANTS

TO MOVE TO THE BIG APPLE,

THE NATION'S
SONGWRITING CAPITAL.

THEY TURNED HIM DOWN.

FELICE AND BOUDLEAUX
WERE ON THEIR WAY

TO PROVING THAT SONGWRITERS,
NOT JUST PERFORMERS,

COULD MAKE IT IN NASHVILLE.

WILLIAMS: â„“ GOOD-BYE, JOE,
AIN'T GOT TO GO â„“

â„“ ME, OH, MY, OH...

MAN: WHEN HANK WILLIAMS
CAME TO TOWN,

THAT WAS GOING TO BE
A BIG DEAL.

I WAS DEFINITELY A BIG FAN.

WILLIAMS: â„“ ME, OH, MY, OH

KENNEDY: I REMEMBER
GOING DOWN AROUND 5:00
FOR AN 8:00 SHOW.

WILLIAMS: â„“ FUN ON THE BAYOU

â„“ JAMBALAYA...

KENNEDY: AND IT WAS
PROBABLY CLOSE TO 10:00

BEFORE THEY BROUGHT HIM OUT.

WE HAD ALL BEEN WAITING.

AND UNFORTUNATELY, HANK HAD
BEEN OVERSERVED OR SOMETHING.

AND HE DID THE CHORUS
TO "JAMBALAYA"

3 TIMES AND WALKED OFF.

THAT WAS MY SEEING
HANK WILLIAMS.

WILLIAMS: â„“ FUN ON THE BAYOU

IT DID NOT BOTHER ME
IN THE LEAST

THAT THAT'S ALL
I HAD SEEN.

I HAD SEEN HANK WILLIAMS.

[HORN HONKS]

MAN: IF HANK WOULD
DRINK A LITTLE BEER,

HE WAS ALL RIGHT.

WHEN HANK, HE GOT
ON THE HARD STUFF,

DRINKING, YOU DIDN'T
WANT TO BE AROUND HIM.

NARRATOR: HANK WILLIAMS'
MARRIAGE TO AUDREY

HAD BEEN TURBULENT
FROM THE START.

AT THEIR HOME IN MONTGOMERY,
THERE WERE CONSTANT TENSIONS

ABOUT HER INSISTENCE ON
BEING PART OF HIS ACT,

TRROUBLES OVER MONEY,
ANGRY FIGHTS

DURING HIS RECURRENT BOUTS
OF HEAVY DRINKING.

HIS FRIEND JIMMY KEY
SAW IT FIRSTHAND.

KEY: I HAD AN APARTMENT.

SO, WHEN HANK AND AUDREY
WOULD HAVE A FIGHT,

HANK WOULD COME
MOVE IN WITH ME.

I CAME HOME
FROM WORK FOR LUNCH,

AND HE'S SITTING
IN THE HALLWAY, AND, UH,

HE WAS JUST
COMPLETELY SNOOKERED.

AND HE WAS WAILING AWAY
ON "LOVESICK BLUES."

AND IT TICKED ME OFF.

I DON'T KNOW,
IT JUST HIT ME WRONG

'CAUSE HE WAS, THE MIDDLE OF
THE DAY, IN THE JUICE TOO MUCH.

AND HE SAID, "WHAT DO YOU THINK
ABOUT THIS SONG?"

AND I SAID, "IT AIN'T
WORTH A DAMN.

IT WON'T SELL 10 RECORDS."

NARRATOR: WILLIAMS' PUBLISHER,
FRED ROSE,

CONTINUED TO HAVE FAITH
IN HIS WAYWARD PROTEGE.

ROSE, A RECOVERING
ALCOHOLIC HIMSELF,

HAD DEVELOPED A FATHERLY
INTEREST IN HANK

AND PLEADED WITH HIM
TO GIVE UP DRINKING.

BUT WILLIAMS WAS
UNABLE TO STOP,

AND HIS REPUTATION AS
AN UNRELIABLE DRUNK SPREAD.

HIS DREAM OF
GOING BACK TO NASHVILLE

AND PLAYING ON
THE GRAND OLE OPRY

SEEMED MORE AND MORE
OUT OF REACH.

THEN, AUDREY FILED FOR DIVORCE.

WILLIAMS: HE CONSTANTLY,
I THINK,

WAS DEALING
WITH THE BATTLE OF,

I DON'T WANT TO SAY
GOOD AND BAD,

BUT MORE LIGHT AND DARK.

HE BELIEVED IN THE REAL
REDEMPTIVE NATURE OF CHRIST

AND THAT, YOU KNOW,
"I HAVE STRUGGLES

"LIKE EVERYONE ELSE DOES,
AND I'M A SINNER.

"AND I DO THIS WRONG
AND DO THIS WRONG,

BUT, YOU KNOW, I HAVE FAITH
IN MY SALVATION."

AND HE WROTE
MANY SONGS ABOUT THAT.

NARRATOR: ONCE,
WILLIAMS HAD BEEN

IN THE BACK SEAT OF
HIS BAND'S TOURING CAR,

SLEEPING OFF
YET ANOTHER BENDER,

WHEN HIS MOTHER,
WHO WAS DRIVING,

SAW THE BEACON LIGHT
OF MONTGOMERY'S AIRPORT
IN THE DISTANCE

AND TRIED TO ROUSE HIM
FROM HIS STUPOR.

"HANK, WAKE UP,"
SHE SHOUTED.

"WE'RE NEARLY HOME.
I JUST SAW THE LIGHT."

BY THE TIME THEY ARRIVED,
HE HAD TURNED IT INTO A SONG,

CLOSELY BASED ON A GOSPEL TUNE
CALLED "HE SET ME FREE."

WILLIAMS: "I SAW THE LIGHT."

EVERYONE KNOWS IT,
EVERYONE LOVES IT.

SLAP YOUR HIP, WHETHER YOU LOVE

JESUS OR NOT,
WHETHER YOU'RE
RELIGIOUS OR NOT,
IT'S A SONG THAT JUST
STICKS IN YOUR HEAD LIKE GLUE,
YOU KNOW, AND YOU
CAN'T STOP SINGING IT.

IT'S HAPPY.
IT'S UP-TEMPO.

AT THE SAME TIME,
IT'S A SONG OF REDEMPTION

AND THIS BROKEN MAN
WHO HAS SEEN THE LIGHT.

WILLIAMS: â„“ PRAISE
THE LORD, I SAW THE LIGHT â„“
â„“ I SAW THE LIGHT,
I SAW THE LIGHT â„“
â„“ NO MORE DARKNESS,
NO MORE NIGHT â„“
â„“ NOW I'M SO HAPPY,
NO SORROW INSIDE â„“
â„“ PRAISE THE LORD,
I SAW THE LIGHT... â„“

CROWELL: AND YOU GO
HOWLING AT THE MOON

ON FRIDAY AND SATURDAY NIGHT.

YOU WRECK YOUR CAR.

YOU KNOW, YOU CHASE WOMEN.
YOU COME IN DRUNK.

BUT THEN, SUNDAY MORNING,
YOU FACE THE MUSIC

'CAUSE SOMEBODY'S MAMA
AND SOMEBODY'S FAVORITE AUNT

IS GOING TO GRAB YOU BY THE EAR
AND DRAG YOU OUT OF THAT BED

AND TAKE YOU TO CHURCH.

EVERYBODY OUT THERE WHO'S HAD

SATURDAY NIGHT
AND SUNDAY MORNING CAN SAY,

"HE'S TELLING US
ABOUT OUR LIVES."

AND WHEN YOU GET IT RIGHT,

WHEN AN ARTIST GETS IT RIGHT
FOR THEMSELVES,

IT'S RIGHT FOR EVERYBODY.

WILLIAMS: â„“ NOW I'M SO HAPPY,
NO SORROW IN SIGHT â„“

â„“ PRAISE THE LORD,
I SAW THE LIGHT â„“

NARRATOR: BY THE TIME
THEIR DIVORCE WAS FINALIZED

IN MAY OF 1948,

HANK AND AUDREY
HAD ALREADY RECONCILED.

HANK HAD SOBERED UP,
AND FRED ROSE SOON GOT HIM

A SPOT ON A NEW RADIO PROGRAM,
THE LOUISIANA HAYRIDE,

BROADCAST FROM SHREVEPORT'S
MUNICIPAL AUDITORIUM.

IT HOPED TO OUTDO
THE GRAND OLE OPRY

AND WAS SEARCHING
FOR NEW TALENT.

HANK WILLIAMS QUICKLY BECAME
THE SHOW'S TOP STAR,

AND HIS MOST POPULAR SONG
ON ITS STAGE

WAS THE ONE HE HAD PLAYED FOR
JIMMY KEY OUTSIDE HIS APARTMENT,

EMMETT MILLER'S OLD HIT,
"LOVESICK BLUES."

DESPITE THE VEHEMENT OBJECTIONS
OF FRED ROSE, WHO CALLED IT

"THE WORST DAMN THING
I EVER HEARD,"

WILLIAMS INSISTED
ON RECORDING IT.

"YOU MIGHT NOT LIKE THE SONG,"
HANK TOLD ROSE,

"BUT WHEN I WALK
OFF THE STAGE

"AND THROW MY HAT
BACK ON THE STAGE

AND THE HAT ENCORES,
THAT'S PRETTY HOT."

MAN: â„“ I'VE GOT A FEELING
CALLED THE BLUES, OH, LORD â„“

â„“ SINCE MY BABY WENT AWAY

THAT SONG, â„“ I DON'T KNOW
WHAT I'M GOING TO DO... â„“

THERE'S A SENTIMENTAL HEARTACHE
TO THAT SONG, BUT YET,

THERE'S STILL A RAW-EDGED
KIND OF RAUCOUS,

MUD IN YOUR EYE, FLIPPING
THE FINGER AT THE WORLD

BECAUSE YOU FEEL
THIS BAD SIDE OF IT.

â„“ HEY, LORD, I'VE GOT 'EM

â„“ I'VE GOT
THE LOVESICK BLUES â„“

THERE'S JUST SOMETHING ABOUT--
IT'S STILL,

BUT THERE'S AN EDGE TO IT.

IT'S ROCKING. ANYWAY.

WILLIAMS: â„“ I GOT A FEELING
CALLED THE BLUES, OH, LORD â„“

â„“ SINCE MY BABY
SAID GOOD-BYE â„“

â a LORD, I DON'T KNOW
WHAT I'LL DO â a

â a ALL I DO IS SIT
AND SIGH, OH, LORD â a

â a THAT LAST LONG DAY
SHE SAID GOOD-BYE â a

â a BUT, LORD, I THOUGHT
I WOULD CRY â a

â a SHE'LL DO ME,
SHE'LL DO YOU â a

â a SHE'S GOT THAT
KIND OF LOVIN' â a

â a LORD, I LOVE TO HEAR HER
WHEN SHE CALLS ME SWEET DADDY â a

â a SUCH A BEAUTIFUL DREAM...

NARRATOR: WITHIN A FEW MONTHS
OF ITS RELEASE IN EARLY 1949,

IT WAS THE NATION'S NUMBER-ONE
HILLYBILLY SONG

AND WOULD STAY ON THE CHARTS
FOR NEARLY A YEAR.

HANK WILLIAMS' ERRATIC CAREER
HAD TURNED AROUND.

AND AUDREY HAD GIVEN BIRTH

TO A CHILD OF THEIR OWN--
HANK WILLIAMS, JR.

WILLIAMS: â a I GOT
THE LOVESICK BLUES... â a

NARRATOR: WITH HIS
NEWFOUND SUCCESS,

WILLIAMS SET HIS SIGHTS
ON THE GRAND OLE OPRY.

ON JUNE 11, 1949,
HE MADE HIS DEBUT,

SINGING "LOVESICK BLUES"
TO SUCH THUNDEROUS APPLAUSE

HE WAS QUICKLY ASKED
TO BECOME A MEMBER.

WILLIAMS: â„“ BUT SHE
JUST WOULDN'T STAY... â„“

NARRATOR: THE WILLIAMS FAMILY
NOW MOVED TO NASHVILLE,

TO A NEW HOUSE ON 3 ACRES.

THEY FILLED IT WITH FURNITURE
SO EXPENSIVE, HANK SAID

HE WAS AFRAID TO SIT ON IT.

IN NOVEMBER, THOUGH STILL

A RELATIVE NEWCOMER
TO THE OPRY,

HE WAS ASKED TO JOIN
OTHER HEADLINERS

ON A TWO-WEEK TOUR OF AMERICAN
MILITARY BASES IN EUROPE.

THE CAST INCLUDED
ROY ACUFF, MINNIE PEARL,

AND LITTLE JIMMY DICKENS.

WILLIAMS: â„“ LORD, I THOUGHT
I WOULD CRY â„“

â„“ SHE'LL DO ME,
SHE'LL DO YOU â„“

â„“ SHE'S GOT THAT
KIND OF LOVIN' â„“

â„“ LORD, I LOVE TO HEAR HER
WHEN SHE CALLS ME SWEET DADDY â„“

â„“ SUCH A BEAUTIFUL...

NARRATOR: IN BERLIN,
HANK WAS ISSUED

A DOCUMENT
WRITTEN IN RUSSIAN,

IN CASE HE ENDED UP
IN THE SOVIET-CONTROLLED ZONE.

"THEY AIN'T GONNA WIN
THE NEXT WAR,"

HE SAID WHEN HE SAW IT.

"THEY CAN'T EVEN SPELL."

BACK HOME, AS 1949 ENDED,
HANK WILLIAMS WAS
THE SECOND-BEST-SELLING
COUNTRY SINGER OF THE YEAR,
WITH 8 SONGS ON THE CHARTS.
ONLY EDDY ARNOLD, WITH 13,
WAS AHEAD OF HIM.

WILLIAMS:
â„¢ ...LOVESICK BLUES

MAN: MY FEELING
IS THAT PEOPLE
WHO BOUGHT RECORDS
CALLED RACE RECORDS
AND PEOPLE WHO BOUGHT RECORDS
CALLED HILLBILLY RECORDS
WERE OFFENDED
BY THOSE TERMS.
AND THE RECORD COMPANIES
FINALLY GOT A CLUE.

NARRATOR: FROM
THE VERY FIRST RECORDINGS
OF FIDLIN' JOHN CARSON
BACK IN 1923,
RECORD LABELS HAD TROUBLE
NAMING THE MUSIC
THAT HAD SPRUNG FROM
SO MANY DIFFERENT ROOTS.
MOST PEOPLE REFERRED TO IT
AS "HILLBILLY MUSIC,"
AND "BILLBOARD" MAGAZINE
USED THAT TERM FOR A WHILE.
BY THE 1940s, THE GROWTH
OF ADDITIONAL STYLES--
WESTERN SWING,
HONKY-TONK, BLUEGRASS--
MADE CATEGORIZING IT

EVEN MORE DIFFICULT,

AND BILLBOARD'S FIRST
POPULARITY CHARTS

LUMPED IT ALL
UNDER THE BROAD TITLE

OF "FOLK RECORDS."

FEW ARTISTS SEEMED TO MIND.

HANK WILLIAMS CALLED HIS SONGS
FOLK MUSIC,

THOUGH HE WAS
EQUALLY COMFORTABLE

REFERRING TO HIMSELF
AS A HILLBILLY.

BUT ERNEST TUBB
AND THE SINGER RED FOLEY

PUSHED FOR
SOMETHING DIFFERENT.

AND ON JUNE 25, 1949,
WHEN BILLBOARD

DROPPED THE TERM
"RACE MUSIC"

AND SUBSTITUTED
"RHYTHM AND BLUES,"

IT ADDED A NEW CATEGORY--
"COUNTRY AND WESTERN."

SLOWLY, THE TERM
"FOLK MUSIC"

BEGAN TO DESCRIBE
SONGS PERFORMED BY GROUPS

MORE LIKELY TO BE BASED
IN NEW YORK CITY.

THOUGH THEY INCLUDED
OLD STANDARDS,

THERE WERE ALSO
SONGS OF SOCIAL PROTEST

THAT BOTHERED SOME MORE
CONSERVATIVE LISTENERS,

ESPECIALLY SINCE
THE UNITED STATES

WAS LOCKED IN A COLD WAR
AGAINST INTERNATIONAL COMMUNISM.

CAUGHT UP IN THE ANTI-COMMUNIST
BACKLASH WAS WOODY GUTHRIE.

GUTHRIE: â€œ BAD, BAD, BAD,
AND I AIN'T... â€œ

NARRATOR: "I AIN'T A COMMUNIST
NECESSARILY," GUTHRIE SAID,

"BUT I'VE BEEN IN THE RED
ALL MY LIFE."

STUART: SOMEBODY
HAD TO CLAIM WOODY.

AND THE FOLK MUSIC COMMUNITY
CLAIMED HIM.

COUNTRY MUSIC MISSED,
'CAUSE, IN MY MIND,

WHEN I LISTEN
TO WOODY GUTHRIE,

HE'S ONE OF THE PUREST
COUNTRY ARTISTS

THAT GOD EVER MADE.

COME ON.

I MEAN, YOU LISTEN
TO THOSE EARLY RECORDINGS,

ANYTHING THAT WOODY
EVER DID, HE'S COUNTRY.

I'M SORRY POLITICS GOT
IN SOME PEOPLE'S MINDS

AND GOT IN THE WAY.

TAKE IT TO THE MUSIC.
PUT IT ON THE MUSIC.

SHINE THE LIGHT ON THE MUSIC
AND WHAT THE MAN WROTE.

UH, MIGHTY POWERFUL.

"DEPORTEE," "THIS LAND

IS YOUR LAND,"

JUST START THERE AND KEEP GOING
TO THE END OF THE LINE.

THERE YOU HAVE COUNTRY MUSIC.

GUTHRIE: â„“ ...THIS WAY

â„“ AND I AIN'T GONNA BE
TREATED THIS WAY â„“

â„“ LORD, GOD, I AIN'T
GONNA BE TREATED THIS WAY â„“

[RADIO STATIC]

RADIO ANNOUNCER:
THE GRAND OLE OPRY

IS THE BIG TALK
OF FOLK MUSIC...

NARRATOR: ONE DAY IN 1950,
AS A WSM ANNOUNCER

INTRODUCED A POPULAR
MORNING PROGRAM,

HE IMPROVISED A LITTLE.

[MAN SINGING]

NARRATOR: THE SHOW, HE SAID,
WAS COMING FROM

"MUSIC CITY USA,
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE."

IT WAS MORE AN OFF-HAND COMMENT
THAN A STATEMENT OF FACT,

BUT FOR MORE AND MORE
COUNTRY ARTISTS,

NASHVILLE HAD BECOME
THE PROMISED LAND

THEY ALL WANTED TO REACH.

THAT NOW INCLUDED
4 MEMBERS OF

THE FIRST FAMILY
OF COUNTRY MUSIC.

â„“ I GOT A MAN,

SWEET TALKING MAN â„¤

â„¤ SWEET TALKING'S
ALL FOR ME â„¤

â„¤ I GOT A MAN,
SWEET TALKING MAN â„¤

â„¤ SWEET TALKING MAN

â„¤ I CAN'T BE FREE

â„¤ AND I DON'T CARE IF
HE HASN'T GOT A DIME â„¤

â„¤ ALL I NEED TO KNOW
IS THAT â„¤

ALL: â„¤ HE'S ALL MINE

â„¤ I GOT A MAN,
SWEET TALKING MAN â„¤

â„¤ SWEET TALKING'S
ALL FOR ME â„¤

â„¤ I GOT A MAN...

McEUEN: I WAS ASKING MAYBELLE
ONE NIGHT IN KNOXVILLE,

SHE WAS DOING A SOUND CHECK,
AND SHE HAD THE AUTOHARP

AND SHE'S TRYING
TO GET IT LOUDER,

AND IT'S STARTING TO FEEDBACK
AND I SAID,

"MAYBELLE, WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN
YOU HAVE TROUBLE WITH THAT MIC?"

"OH, I JUST DO WHAT
I TELL THE GIRLS TO DO

"WHEN THEY HAVE TROUBLE
WITH THE MIC,

JUST SMILE REAL LOUD."

GOOD ADVICE.

â„¤ I GOT A MAN,
SWEET TALKING MAN â„¤

â„¤ SWEET TALKING'S

ALL FOR ME â„“a

â„“a YES, HIS

â„“a SWEET TALKING'S
ALL FOR ME â„“a

â„“a I SAID HIS

â„“a SWEET TALKING'S
ALL FOR ME â„“a

[CHEERS AND APPLAUSE]

NARRATOR: BACK IN 1927,
MAYBELLE CARTER HAD BEEN

PART OF THE ORIGINAL
CARTER FAMILY

WHEN THEY MADE THEIR
GROUNDBREAKING RECORDINGS

IN BRISTOL, TENNESSEE.

NOW SHE WAS PERFORMING
WITH HER 3 DAUGHTERS.

MAN: HELEN CARTER
WAS THE INSTRUMENTALIST
IN THE GROUP.

SHE PLAYED ACOUSTIC GUITAR,
SHE PLAYED THE ACCORDION.

SHE ALSO SANG.

SHE WAS A WONDERFUL
GUITAR PLAYER,

AS STRONG AS HER MOTHER,
IN HER OWN STYLE.

ANITA WAS THE YOUNGEST
OF THE CARTER SISTERS.

ANITA HAD THE MOST BEAUTIFUL,
PITCH-PERFECT,

CLEAR SOPRANO VOICE.

MY MOTHER, THE MIDDLE CHILD,
JUNE CARTER,

WAS NOT THE VOCALIST
THAT HER SISTER ANITA WAS.

MY MOTHER HAD THIS ENERGY
AND THIS VIBRANCE

AND THIS VITALITY
THAT CAME THROUGH

WITH EVERYTHING SHE DID.

WOMAN: MY MOM WAS BORN
AN ENTERTAINER.

SHE HAD A GREAT
COMEDIC SENSE.

AND MOM MADE HERSELF OUT TO BE
NOT AS GOOD A SINGER AS SHE WAS

BECAUSE HER SISTERS TEASED HER
ALL THE TIME

THAT SHE COULDN'T SING
AS GOOD AS THEM.

SO, MAMA KIND OF
TURNED IT INTO AN ACT,

YOU KNOW, WHERE SHE'D GO
â„“ I'M AMMMAAA MEEE MEEE...

AND PEOPLE WOULD
CRACK UP LAUGHING.

SO, SHE WOULD JUST
GO ON WITH IT,

TRYING TO FIND HER NOTE.

SHE KNEW EXACTLY
WHERE IT WAS.

CARTERS SISTERS AND MOTHER
MAYBELLE: â„“ LITTLE DARLING,
PAL OF MINE â„“

RADIO ANNOUNCER:
AND NOW, FOLKS, IT'S TIME--

GIRL: WHAT YOU
TRYING TO DO ANYHOW,

JOE, INSULT ME
OR SOMETHING OTHER?

NO, I'M JUST TRYING
TO TELL THE FOLKS
WHO YOU ARE.

OH, THERE AIN'T
NO SENSE IN THAT.

THAT TAKES UP
TOO MUCH TIME.

I'M JUST MOMMY MAYBELLE'S
MIDDLE-SIZED YOUNGIN',

LITTLE OL' PUNY JUNNEY,

AND I AIM TO DO
A LITTLE SINGING HERE

IF YOU-INS
WON'T RUN OFF.

IF I CAN GET EVERYBODY
TO HELP ME OUT,

WE GOT AN OLD TIMER
HERE CALLED "I'LL BE
BACK FOR SUNDAY."

â„“ MY LITTLE PEA PATCH
SWEETHEART â„“

â„“ YOU'RE CUTE AS
PUMPKIN SEEDS... â„“

NARRATOR: IN 1948,
THE CARTERS HAD LANDED A JOB

ON THE MIDDAY MERRY-GO-ROUND
ON KNOXVILLE'S WNOX

AND ASKED A GIFTED YOUNG
GUITARIST TO JOIN THE ENSEMBLE.

HIS PLAYING STYLE,
MUCH DIFFERENT FROM MAYBELLE'S
DISTINCTIVE "CARTER SCRATCH,"
LEANED MORE TOWARD JAZZ
THAN OLD-TIME COUNTRY MUSIC.

JUNE: WHOO-HOO!

NARRATOR:
CHESTER ATKINS CAME FROM

THE REMOTE HOLLOWES
OF EAST TENNESSEE,

WHERE HE HAD MADE
HIS OWN CRYSTAL SET

TO HEAR MUSIC
ON LOCAL RADIO STATIONS.

PAINFULLY SHY AND SICKLY
AS A BOY,

HE HAD TAKEN UP
THE FIDDLE AND THEN GUITAR,

DRAWN TO THE STYLINGS OF
JAZZ GUITARIST DJANGO REINHARDT

AND THE INFLUENTIAL
FINGER PICKING

OF KENTUCKY'S MERLE TRAVIS,
WHO HAD ESTABLISHED HIMSELF

AS A TOP SESSION MUSICIAN
ON THE WEST COAST.

JUNE: â„“ I'LL BE BACK
SUNDAY â„“

WE ARE FIXING TO HEAR
FROM CHESTER ATKINS.

HE'S GONNA INTRODUCE
SOME REAL FANCY GUITAR PICKING.

[GUITAR MUSIC]

GILL: HE WAS SUCH A STICKLER
FOR THE MELODY,

WHICH I ALWAYS
ADMIREDB ABOUT CHET.

YOU ALWAYS COULD
HEAR THE MELODY,

AND HE WAS NOT THE KIND
OF GUITAR PLAYER

THAT WAS PLAYING YOU
ALL KINDS OF FLASHY STUFF.

HIS--EVERYTHING HE PLAYED,
AS HARD AS IT WAS,

STILL WAS CENTERED
VERY MUCH AROUND THE MELODY.

THERE'S A GREAT STORY ABOUT CHET
IN THE DAY WHERE SOME MUSICIAN,

THEY WERE WORKING ON SOMETHING,
AND THE MUSICIAN SAID,

"I REALLY DON'T KNOW
WHAT TO PLAY HERE, CHET."

CHET JUST SIMPLY SAID,
"THE MELODY USUALLY WORKS."

[LAUGHS]

NARRATOR: DESPITE
HIS VIRTUOSITY,

ATKINS HAD BEEN HAVING TROUBLE
MAKING A LIVING,

BOUNCING FROM ONE
RADIO STATION TO ANOTHER,

FIRED BECAUSE HIS MUSIC WASN'T
CONSIDERED HILLBILLY ENOUGH

FOR THEIR AUDIENCES.

HE WAS FEELING
DEFEATED WHEN

THE CARTER SISTERS
AND MOTHER MAYBELLE

OFFERED HIM AN EQUAL SHARE
OF THEIR RECEIPTS

IF HE WOULD BECOME
PART OF THEIR ACT.

THE COMBINATION OF HIS
BLUESY GUITAR PLAYING,

THE CARTERS' FIRM GROUNDING IN
TRADITIONAL APPALACHIAN BALLADS,

AND JUNE'S
EFFERVESCENT PERSONALITY

WAS AN IMMEDIATE SUCCESS.

[GUITAR PLAYING]

IN 1949, THEY ALL
MOVED TO A STATION

IN SPRINGFIELD, MISSOURI,
WHERE THEY BECAME

THE FEATURED ATTRACTION ON

A NATIONALLY SYNDICATED SHOW

SPONSORED BY RED STAR FLOUR.

WHEN THE COMPANY'S
SALES INCREASED,

ITS MAIN COMPETITOR,
THE MARTHA WHITE FLOUR COMPANY,

WHICH SPONSORED A SEGMENT
ON THE GRAND OLE OPRY,

PRESSURED WSM TO FINALLY BRING
THE CARTERS TO NASHVILLE.

IT WAS AN OFFER EVERY
COUNTRY MUSICIAN DREAMED OF.

BUT THERE WAS A PROBLEM.

THEY WERE TOLD THEY COULDN'T
BRING CHET ATKINS WITH THEM.

CARTER CASH:
THEY SAID, "PLEASE COME,

BUT DON'T BRING
THAT GUITAR PLAYER,"

AND THE REASONING BEHIND THIS,
ACCORDING TO MY MOTHER,

WAS THAT THE GRAND OLE OPRY
WAS CONCERNED THAT

CHET WOULD COME TO NASHVILLE
AND BASICALLY TAKE OVER.

CARTER: THE OPRY GUYS
DIDN'T WANT CHET AROUND

BECAUSE HE HAD
SOMETHING TO OFFER.

AND HE WAS GOING TO TAKE
SOME WORK AWAY FROM THEM.

CARTER CASH: MY GRANDFATHER
AND GRANDMOTHER SAID,

"THANK YOU VERY MUCH, WE'RE
GOING TO STAY IN SPRINGFIELD.

WE'RE NOT INTERESTED IN COMING
IF WE CAN'T BRING CHESTER."

NARRATOR: THE OPRY
SWEETENED ITS OFFER.

STILL, THE CARTERS HELD OUT.

CARTER: GRANDMA HAD TAKEN CHET
KIND OF UNDER HER WING.

AND THE GIRLS,
THEY ADORED CHET.

GRANDMA STOOD UP FOR HIM
AND SAID,

"NO, CHESTER'S COMING."

NARRATOR:
WSM FINALLY GAVE IN.

THE CARTER SISTERS
AND MOTHER MAYBELLE,

WITH CHET ATKINS, DEBUTED ON
THE OPRY IN SEPTEMBER 1950.

"THE ROOF," JUNE RECALLED,
"CAME OFF THAT BUILDING."

[CHEERS AND APPLAUSE]

NASHVILLE WOULD BECOME
THE CARTERS' HOME,

AND CHET ATKINS' HOME, TOO.

HE WOULD BECOME ONE OF THE MOST
SOUGHT-AFTER GUITAR PLAYERS

IN MUSIC CITY,

JUST AS THE OTHER
MUSICIANS HAD FEARED.

WILLIAMS: â„¢ HEAR THAT
LONESOME WHIP-POOR-WILL... â„¢

STUART: SONGWRITING IS THE MOST
MYSTERIOUS OF ALL THE TRADES.

IT CANNOT BE EXPLAINED.

THERE'S A CRAFT THAT
GOES ALONG WITH IT.

BUT AT THE SAME TIME,
IT'S THE DIVINE GIFT.

IT'S THAT THING
YOU CAN'T EXPLAIN.

WILLIAMS: â„“ I'M SO
LONESOME I COULD CRY â„“

â„“ I'VE NEVER SEEN...

STUART: I GUESS HE SAID IT BEST
WHEN SOMEBODY ASKED HIM,

"HANK, HOW DO YOU WRITE
THEM OLD SAD SONGS?"

HE SAYS, "HOSS,
I DON'T WRITE 'EM.

I JUST HANG ONTO THE PEN
AND GOD SENDS THEM THROUGH."

THE WAY I SEE IT, IF YOU'RE
COLLABORATING WITH GOD,

THE CREATOR, WHO MADE
THE MOUNTAINS AND THE STARS

AND THE MOON,
AND THE SKY, YOU KNOW,

A 3-MINUTE COUNTRY SONG IS NOT
THAT BIG OF A STRETCH, BUT, UM,

THOSE KIND OF SONGS, LIKE
"I'M SO LONESOME I COULD CRY,"

"YOUR CHEATIN' HEART,"
UNEXPLAINABLE.

LEE: â„“ CAN YOU HEAR THAT
LONESOME WHIP-POOR-WILL? â„“

â„“ HE SOUNDS
TOO BLUE TO FLY â„“

NOW, WHAT A LINE IS THAT?

HAVE YOU EVER THOUGHT OF A BIRD
BEIN' TOO BLUE TO FLY?

APPARENTLY HANK DID.

WILLIAMS: â„“ HAVE YOU SEEN
A ROBIN WEEP? â„“

WILLIAMS: HANK WAS SAYING, "HEAR
THAT LONESOME WHIP-POOR-WILL.

"HE SOUNDS TOO BLUE TO FLY.

"THE MIDNIGHT TRAIN
IS WHINING LOW,

I'M SO LONESOME I COULD CRY."

SO, IT'S THIS
STUNNING, BEAUTIFUL,

HEARTBREAKING LONELINESS,
BUT IT'S--

IT'S SIMPLE ENOUGH
ENGLISH, BUT IT'S JUST
PUT TOGETHER IN

THESE LITTLE, PERFECT LITTLE
MAZES OF WORDS THAT JUST CUT

RIGHT AT YOUR HEART,
YOU KNOW?

WILLIAMS:
â„“ ...OF A FALLING STAR

â„“ LIGHTS UP A PURPLE SKY

â„“ AND AS I WONDER
WHERE YOU ARE â„“

â„“ I'M SO LONESOME
I COULD CRY â„“

NARRATOR: LIKE JIMMIE RODGERS,
HANK WILLIAMS COULD NEITHER

READ NOR WRITE
MUSICAL NOTATIONS.

BUT HE WAS NOW CRANKING OUT
HIT AFTER HIT.

"HIS SECRET," HE SAID,
"CAN BE EXPLAINED

IN JUST ONE WORD--
SINCERITY."

WILLIAMS:
â„“ I WENT DOWN TO THE RIVER

TO WATCH THE FISH
SWIM BY... â„“

NARRATOR: MOST OF HIS SONGS
WERE HONKY-TONK.

WILLIAMS:
â€œ BUT I GOT TO THE RIVER

â€œ SO LONESOME I WANTED
TO DIE, OH, LORD... â€œ

NARRATOR: AND HE DREW ADORING
CROWDS WHEREVER HE WENT.

"HE HELD THEM IN
THE PALM OF HIS HAND,"

ONE OF THE DRIFTING COWBOYS
REMEMBERED.

"ONCE HANK WALKED OUT THERE

AND CURLED UP AROUND
THAT MICROPHONE," HE ADDED,

"A NAKED LADY COULD HAVE RODE
AN AFRICAN ELEPHANT BEHIND HIM

AND WOULDN'T NOBODY
HAVE SEEN HER."

CROWELL: MY FATHER'S
DREAM IN LIFE

WAS THAT HE SHOULD HAVE BEEN
HANK WILLIAMS.

HE TOOK ME TO SEE
HANK WILLIAMS'

NEXT-TO-LAST PERFORMANCE
IN HOUSTON.

IT WAS DECEMBER 14, 1952.

WE WENT, AND I WAS
ON HIS SHOULDERS,

AND I REALLY THINK IT IS
MY SECOND MEMORY IN LIFE.

BUT THE MEMORY WAS ALL--

WAS MADE MORE VIVID
AND MORE REAL

THAT MY FATHER WOULD
CONSTANTLY REMIND ME,

"DON'T FORGET, I TOOK YOU
TO SEE HANK WILLIAMS.

I TOOK YOU TO SEE
THE HILLBILLY SHAKESPEARE."

WILLIAMS:
â€œ AND NOW

â€œ I'M LONESOME BLUES

NARRATOR: AT THE END
OF EACH TOUR,

HANK WOULD RETURN WITH
A SUITCASE BULGING WITH MONEY

THAT HE EMPTIED ONTO
THE CASHIER'S COUNTER

AT HIS NASHVILLE BANK.

THEN HE AND AUDREY SPENT IT
AS FAST AS THEY COULD.

SHE BOUGHT THEM
HIS AND HERS CADILLACS.

HE LEFT EXTRAVAGANT TIPS
AT RESTAURANTS,

SENT MONEY TO PEOPLE
WHO WROTE HIM

WITH HARD-LUCK STORIES.

TOGETHER, THEY OPENED
A CLOTHING STORE

IN DOWNTOWN NASHVILLE NEAR
ERNEST TUBB'S RECORD STORE.

WILLIAMS WAS
CONSTANTLY COMPOSING,

WRITING NEW LYRICS
WHILE HE TRAVELED--

ON SCRAPS OF PAPER HE STUFFED
INTO HIS WALLET,

ON HOTEL STATIONERY,
EVEN ON THE CARDBOARD

THAT CAME WITH
HIS PRESSED SHIRTS.

BACKSTAGE AT THE OPRY,

WHERE HE AS NOW
THE SHOW'S BIGGEST STAR,

HE WOULD SOMETIMES TRY OUT
A NEW SONG FOR OTHER ARTISTS

AND ASK IF THEY WANTED IT.

IF THEY REALLY LIKED IT, HE
WOULD USUALLY RECORD IT HIMSELF.

JIMMY DICKENS GOT THE TREATMENT
WHEN HE WAS ON TOUR

WITH WILLIAMS
AND MINNIE PEARL.

DICKENS: HE SAID,
"YOU NEED A HIT."

I SAID, "WELL, WHO DOESN'T?"

[LAUGHS]

HE SAID, "LET'S JUST
WRITE YOU ONE RIGHT NOW.

YOU GOT ANY PAPER?"

AND MINNIE PEARL REACHED IN
HER GLOVE COMPARTMENT

AND GAVE HIM
A LITTLE PAD OF PAPER,

AND HE GAVE ME A PEN AND HE
SAID, "NOW, WRITE THIS DOWN."

AND HE'D QUOTE ME
ONE LINE AT A TIME,

ONE LINE AT A TIME.

AND IN 15 MINUTES, HE HAD
WRITTEN "HEY, GOOD LOOKIN'."

AND HE SAID, "NOW,
YOU RECORD THIS,

AND IT'LL MAKE YOU A HIT."

I SAID, "AS SOON AS I
CAN GET IN THE STUDIO,
IT'LL BE PUT DOWN."

ABOUT A WEEK LATER, HE SAID,
"I RECORDED YOUR SONG TODAY."

I SAID, "WHEN IT HITS,
YOU'LL KNOW THAT IT'S MINE."

HE SAID IT WITH A SMILE.

MAN: HANK WILLIAMS!

JUNE: GO RIGHT THERE!

COME HERE, HANK.

[CHEERS AND APPLAUSE]

JUNE, HONEY,
I GOT A SONG I WROTE

JUST ESPECIALLY FOR YOU
I'M GONNA SING HERE.

JUST FOR YOU.

WHAT IS IT?

IT'S CALLED
"HEY, GOOD LOOKIN'."

OHH!

â€œ SAID, HEY, GOOD LOOKIN'

â€œ WHATCHA GOT COOKIN'?

â€œ HOW'S ABOUT COOKIN'
SOMETHING UP WITH ME? â€œ

â€œ SAY, HEY, SWEET BABY

â€œ DON'T YOU THINK MAYBE...

NARRATOR: "HEY, GOOD LOOKIN'"
WOULD BE ANOTHER

NUMBER-ONE HIT
FOR HANK WILLIAMS.

â€œ I GOT A HOT ROD FORD
AND A \$2.00 BILL â€œ

â€œ AND I KNOW A SPOT
RIGHT OVER THE HILL â€œ

â€œ THERE'S SODA POP
AND THE DANCIN' IS FREE â€œ

â€œ SO IF YOU WANT TO HAVE
FUN, COME ALONG WITH ME â€œ

â a SAY, HEY, GOOD LOOKIN'

â a WATCHA GOT COOKIN'?

â a HOW'S ABOUT COOKIN'
SOMETHING UP WITH ME? â a

[CHEERS AND APPLAUSE]

NARRATOR: IN 1951,
WHEN MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA

STAGED A HUGE HOMECOMING
FOR THEIR FAVORITE SON,

9,000 PEOPLE SHOWED UP.

THE PROGRAM INCLUDED
THE CARTER SISTERS
AND MOTHER MAYBELLE

WITH CHET ATKINS.

MAN: FRIENDS,
IT'S TIME ON OUR SHOW...

NARRATOR: THAT SAME YEAR,
THE MAKERS OF

MOTHER'S BEST FLOUR
SAW WILLIAMS AS A DRAW
FOR THEIR PRODUCTS,

AND HE PRE-RECORDED
70 15-MINUTE RADIO SHOWS

FOR THEM TO DISTRIBUTE.

BESIDES HIS HITS, AND ALWAYS
A HYMN OR GOSPEL SONG,

THE BROADCASTS OFTEN
INCLUDED RECITATIONS

FROM AN ALTER EGO HE CREATED,
LUKE THE DRIFTER,

WHO DISPENSED MORAL ADVICE

HANK WILLIAMS HIMSELF
NEVER FOLLOWED.

WILLIAMS: â a PRAISE THE LORD,
I SAW THE LIGHT... â a

NARRATOR: AND SOMETIMES, OVER

THE OBJECTIONS OF THE BAND,

THE SHOWS INCLUDED VOCALS
BY AUDREY, WHO,

DESPITE HER LIMITED TALENT,
SEEMED TO CRAVE THE LIMELIGHT

THAT INCREASINGLY FOCUSED
ONLY ON HANK.

WILLIAMS: â„¢ PRAISE
THE LORD, I SAW THE LIGHT â„¢

NARRATOR: THOUGH HANK
AND AUDREY PRESENTED

A PUBLIC IMAGE OF
A HAPPY COUPLE,

THEIR RELATIONSHIP WAS
AS EXPLOSIVE AS EVER,

FILLED WITH FIGHTS
AND BROKEN FURNITURE.

SHE SUSPECTED HIM
OF CHEATING ON HER,

AND WHEN HE WAS ON THE ROAD,

HE SUSPECTED HER
OF THE SAME THING.

KEY: THEY LOVED EACH OTHER.

I THINK THEY TRULY DID
LOVE EACH OTHER.

BUT FOR SOME REASON,
THEY JUST...

THEY FOUGHT A BATTLE,
I THINK, EVERY DAY.

NARRATOR: AFTER A FEW MONTHS
OF SOBRIETY,

HANK HAD RESUMED HIS BOUTS
OF HEAVY DRINKING.

ONCE, WHEN AUDREY HAD
LOCKED HIM FROM THEIR HOME,

WILLIAMS CHECKED INTO
THE TULANE HOTEL

AND FELL ASLEEP IN HIS ROOM
WITH A LIT CIGARETTE,

WHICH STARTED A FIRE THAT
RESULTED IN HIM BEING ARRESTED.

OCCASIONALLY, HE TURNED
TO MOTHER MAYBELLE.

MY MOTHER WOULD TELL ME

THAT HE WOULD COME TO THE HOUSE
SOMETIMES, YOU KNOW,

LATE AT NIGHT AND WOULD JUST
SIT IN THE LIVING ROOM

OR IN THE KITCHEN AREA
AND HAVE COFFEE

AND TALK TO MAYBELLE.

CARTER: THEY WORRIED
ABOUT HIM A LOT.

AND THEY'D TRY TO STEAL
HIS LIQUOR, POUR IT OUT.

THERE WAS NEVER
ANY JUDGMENT THERE.

AND HER DOOR
WAS ALWAYS OPEN.

THERE WAS SOME CORNBREAD
AND SOME STEW,

AND SOME PINTO BEANS WITH

A HAM HOCK IN IT,
NO MATTER WHAT.

SHE'D FEED YOU
AND LIFT YOU BACK UP

AND TALK TO YOU
AND COUNSEL YOU.

SHE'D JUST LOVE ON YOU
UNTIL YOU FELT BETTER.

NARRATOR: WILLIAMS CONTINUED
TO POUR HIS TROUBLES

INTO HIS SONGS.

WHEN AUDREY REFUSED TO LET HIM

KISS HER ONE DAY,

HE TOLD THE CHILDREN'S
BABYSITTER HIS WIFE HAD

A COLD, COLD HEART.

THEN HE SAT DOWN, AND IN
AN HOUR WROTE OUT A SONG.

[APPLAUSE]

â€œ I TRY SO HARD,
MY DEAR, TO SHOW â€œ

â€œ THAT YOU'RE
MY EVERY DREAM â€œ

â€œ YET YOU'RE AFRAID
EACH THING I DO â€œ

â€œ IS JUST SOME EVIL SCHEME

â€œ THE MEMORY FROM
YOUR LONESOME PAST â€œ

â€œ KEEPS US SO FAR APART

â€œ WHY CAN'T I FREE
YOUR DOUBTFUL MIND â€œ

â€œ AND MELT YOUR
COLD, COLD HEART? â€œ

GILL: I THINK
THERE'S SUCH BEAUTY

IN THE STORYTELLING
AND IN THE LYRICS.

IF YOU HEAR THE WORDS,
"WHY CAN'T I FREE
YOUR DOUBTFUL MIND

AND MELT YOUR
COLD, COLD HEART,"

IF THAT DOESN'T STIR
SOMETHING UP IN YOU,

THEN WE'LL PASS.

WE'LL JUST--WE'LL JUST
LET YOU GO ON BY.

BUT, TO ME, THAT'S AS POETIC AS
ANYTHING YOU COULD EVER HEAR.

AND IT'S REAL.

â€œ IN ANGER, UNKIND
WORDS ARE SAID â€œ

â€œ THAT MAKE THE
TEARDROPS START... â€œ

NARRATOR: AS "COLD, COLD HEART"
ROSE IN THE COUNTRY CHARTS,

MANY POPULAR ARTISTS, INCLUDING
TONY BENNETT, PERRY COMO,

DINAH WASHINGTON,
AND LOUIS ARMSTRONG,

RECORDED THEIR OWN VERSIONS.

STUART: IT WAS SAID
ONE TIME THAT HIS SONGS
COULD GO TO PLACES

THAT HE COULDN'T
BECAUSE HE WAS SO PURE
AS A COUNTRY BOY

AND AS A COUNTRY SINGER.

AND HIS HILLBILLY FENCE
MIGHT HAVE STOPPED HIM,

BUT THE SONGS COULD
GO BEYOND THE FENCE.

NARRATOR: MORE TROUBLES
PLAGUED HIM.

HE FELL OFF A STAGE IN CANADA,

FURTHER AGGRAVATING HIS
CHRONIC BACK PROBLEM

AND SENDING HIM TO THE HOSPITAL
TO BE FITTED

FOR A STEEL AND LEATHER BRACE
THAT MADE

LIFE ON THE ROAD EXCRUCIATING.

â€œ THE MORE WE DRIFT
APART... â€œ

NARRATOR: OVER CHRISTMAS
OF 1951,

HE AND AUDREY ARGUED
AND FOUGHT FOR A WEEK.

BY NEW YEAR'S EVE, SHE HAD
MOVED OUT WITH THE CHILDREN.

10 DAYS LATER, SHE FILED
FOR DIVORCE...AGAIN.

â„“ ...COLD HEART

[APPLAUSE]

WILLIAMS:
â„“ AND AS I WONDER...

STUART: I HEARD THIS BEAUTIFUL
STORY ABOUT CHARLIE PARKER

ONE TIME STANDING IN FRONT OF
THE JUKEBOX IN NEW YORK CITY
LISTENING TO COUNTRY RECORDS.

AND HIS BUDDIES WERE GOING,
"WHAT ARE YOU DOING?"

HE SAYS, "THE STORIES, MAN,
IT'S THE STORIES."

LEFTY FRIZZELL:
â„“ IF YOU'VE GOT THE MONEY

â„“ I'VE GOT THE TIME

â„“ WE'LL GO HONKY-TONKING,
WE'LL HAVE A TIME... â„“

NARRATOR: BY 1952,
1,200 RADIO STATIONS

IN EVERY CORNER
OF THE NATION

WERE DEVOTING
AT LEAST TWO HOURS

TO COUNTRY AND WESTERN MUSIC
EVERY DAY.

HANK WILLIAMS MAY HAVE BEEN
THE BEST-KNOWN HONKY-TONK STAR,
BUT HE WAS NOT ALONE.

TWO SINGERS FROM

THE LOUISIANA HAYRIDE,
WEBB PIERCE AND FARON YOUNG,
WERE HOPING TO GRADUATE
TO THE GRAND OLE OPRY.

FRIZZELL: â„“ THERE AIN'T
NO USE TO TARRY â„“
â„“ SO LET'S
START OUT TONIGHT â„“
â„“ WE'LL SPREAD JOY,
OH, BOY, OH, BOY â„“
â„“ AND WE'LL SPREAD IT RIGHT
â„“ WE'LL HAVE MORE
FUN, BABY â„“

â„“ ALL THE WAY DOWN THE LINE
â„“ IF YOU GOT THE MONEY,
HONEY â„“
â„“ I'VE GOT THE TIME...

NARRATOR: BUT OF ALL
THE RISING HONKY-TONK STARS,

NONE WAS CHALLENGING
HANK WILLIAMS FOR SUPREMACY

MORE THAN LEFTY FRIZZELL
FROM CORSICANA, TEXAS,

WHO HAD GIVEN UP
WORKING OIL RIGS
TO SING AND WRITE SONGS.

HAGGARD: A LOT OF PEOPLE
REFER TO THAT PERIOD

AS THE PERIOD OF
HANK AND LEFTY,
AND THE JUKEBOX
WAS JUST FULL OF
LEFTY FRIZZELL
AND HANK WILLIAMS.

AND IT WAS A TOSSUP
TO WHO WAS THE HOTTEST.

HE RELEASED A SONG CALLED
"I LOVE YOU A THOUSAND WAYS,"

AND THE BACK SIDE
OF IT WAS CALLED

"IF YOU'VE GOT THE MONEY,
I'VE GOT THE TIME."

BOTH OF THEM WENT ON TO BE
COUNTRY MUSIC STANDARDS.

THE NEXT 5 RECORDS WERE
TREATED THE SAME WAY.

THEY WERE ALL
NUMBER-ONE SONGS.

FRIZZELL: â„“...HONEY,
I'VE GOT THE TIME â„“

NARRATOR: IN EARLY 1952,
A NEW SONG,

"THE WILD SIDE OF LIFE,"

ROCKETED TO THE TOP OF
THE COUNTRY AND WESTERN CHARTS.

IT WAS SUNG BY ANOTHER SINGER
FROM TEXAS, HANK THOMPSON.

THOMPSON: â„“ THE GLAMOUR
OF THE GAY NIGHTLIFE
HAS LURED YOU... â„“

NARRATOR: ITS MELODY
CAME FROM THE CARTER FAMILY'S

"I'M THINKING TONIGHT
OF MY BLUE EYES."

THOMPSON: â„“... AND
LIQUOR FLOW â„“

â„“ YOU GAVE UP THE ONLY ONE
THAT EVER LOVED YOU... â„“

NARRATOR: IT WAS TOLD FROM
THE POINT OF VIEW OF A HUSBAND

WHO BELIEVES
HIS WIFE'S ATTRACTION
TO THE LOCAL HONKY-TONK

HAS RUINED THEIR MARRIAGE.

THOMPSON: â„“ ...OF LIFE

NARRATOR:
"THE WILD SIDE OF LIFE"

WAS STILL RISING
IN THE CHARTS

WHEN A NEW SONG
WITH THE SAME MELODY

CAME OUT AS A DIRECT ANSWER
TO IT, SUNG BY KITTY WELLS.

WELLS: â„“ AS I SIT HERE
TONIGHT, THE JUKEBOX PLAYING â„“

â„“ THE TUNE ABOUT
THE WILD SIDE OF LIFE â„“

â„“ AS I LISTEN
TO THE WORDS... â„“

WOMAN: I LIKED
THAT SONG BEING

THE ANSWER TO
HANK THOMPSON'S SONG

BECAUSE HE HAD HAD HIS SAY,
AND IT WAS REALLY AMAZING

THAT KITTY WOULD
STAND UP AND HAVE HER SAY.

WELLS: â„“ IT WASN'T GOD WHO
MADE HONKY-TONK ANGELS â„“

â„“ AS YOU SAID IN
THE WORDS OF YOUR SONG â„“

â„“ TOO MANY...

NARRATOR: "IT'S A SHAME
ALL THE BLAME

IS ON US WOMEN," SHE SANG.

"TOO MANY TIMES MARRIED MEN
THINK THEY'RE STILL SINGLE.

THAT'S CAUSED MANY A GOOD GIRL
TO GO WRONG."

WELLS: â„“ TO GO WRONG...

NARRATOR:

THE HAPPILY-MARRIED KITTY WELLS

WAS NO HONKY-TONK ANGEL.

AFTER SEVERAL UNSUCCESSFUL
ATTEMPTS AT GOSPEL RECORDINGS,

SHE HAD AGREED TO DO
THE NEW SONG

SIMPLY TO EARN THE SESSION FEE
AND HAD NO EXPECTATIONS FOR IT.

BUT HER SONG STRUCK A CHORD
IN WOMEN EVERYWHERE.

IT SOON ECLIPSED
"THE WILD SIDE OF LIFE"

TO BECOME THE FIRST SONG
BY A WOMAN

TO REACH THE TOP OF
BILLBOARD'S COUNTRY
AND WESTERN CHART.

WELLS: â„“ IT WASN'T GOD
WHO MADE...

WOMAN: WOMEN WERE
SINGING SONGS FROM
A MAN'S POINT OF VIEW.

THEY WERE SINGING WHAT MEN
WANTED US TO SING, YOU KNOW,

THAT, "I'LL BE HERE,
YOU CAN GO DO WHATEVER,

BUT I'LL ALWAYS
BE HERE WAITING."

WELL, THAT WAS CHANGING,
YOU KNOW?

WELLS: â„“ ...CAUSED
MANY A GOOD GIRL â„“

â„“ TO GO WRONG

[CHEERS AND APPLAUSE]

[NEW SONG BEGINS]

WILLIAMS:
â„“ THE NEWS IS OUT...

NARRATOR: AS HANK
AND AUDREY WILLIAMS'

SECOND DIVORCE WAS FINALIZED
IN 1952,

HE ONCE MORE TURNED
HIS TROUBLES INTO A SONG.

WILLIAMS:
â„“ ...OF RUNNING ROUND...

KEY: "YOU WIN AGAIN."

THAT WAS AN AUDREY SONG.

IT'S A SAD SONG, BUT IT
REALLY TELLS A LOT

ABOUT HIS LIFE AT
THAT POINT.

AND I THINK WHEN HE
SPLIT WITH AUDREY,

I THINK THAT WAS THE
BEGINNING OF THE END.

WILLIAMS:
â„“ THIS HEART OF MINE

â„“ COULD NEVER SEE

NARRATOR: WILLIAMS MOVED IN
BRIEFLY WITH RAY PRICE,

A RISING COUNTRY STAR
WHO REMEMBERED HANK

CALLING AUDREY EVERY DAY,
ONLY TO HAVE HER HANG UP.

WILLIAMS:
â„“ JUST TRUSTIN' YOU

â„“ WAS MY GREAT SIN

â„“ WHAT CAN I DO?

â„“ YOU WIN AGAIN

[NEW SONG BEGINS]

â„“ OH, PLEASE
DON'T LET ME LOVE YOU... â„“

NARRATOR: HE WAS STILL WRITING

AND RECORDING HIT AFTER HIT.

WILLIAMS:
â„“ I'M FEELING BLUE

â„“ AND PLEASE...

NARRATOR: HIS PUBLISHER
REPORTED THAT 89 SONGS

THAT WILLIAMS HAD
WRITTEN WERE RECORDED

IN THE FIRST HALF
OF 1952 ALONE.

WILLIAMS:
â„“ YOU'LL BE UNTRUE

â„“ BECAUSE YOU'RE SWEET...

NARRATOR: BUT HIS PHYSICAL
CONDITION WAS DETERIORATING.

NOTHING EASED HIS
CONSTANT BACK PAIN,

AND NOW HE ADDED A STEADY
MIX OF DRUGS TO COMBAT IT--

AMPHETAMINES TO
GET HIMSELF GOING,

SEDATIVES TO HELP HIM SLEEP,

SOMETIMES MORPHINE
TO NUMB THE PAIN.

KEY: THE DRINKING
WAS BAD ENOUGH,

BUT HE PROGRESSED
TO OTHER THINGS.

WILLIAMS: â„“ YOU'LL BE UNTRUE

KEY: I WENT ON
OUT TO THE HOUSE,

AND HE CAME OUT
IN HIS UNDERWEAR,

AND HE LOOKED LIKE
DEATH EATING A CRACKER.

I MEAN, HE JUST...

IT WAS REALLY,
REALLY SAD TO SEE.

NARRATOR: IN A RECORDING
SESSION IN NASHVILLE,

WILLIAMS WAS SO WEAK,
HE WOULD COLLAPSE

INTO A CHAIR
TO REST BETWEEN TAKES.

AS HE FINISHED
THE LAST SONG,

"I'LL NEVER GET OUT
OF THIS WORLD ALIVE,"

CHET ATKINS, WHO PLAYED
GUITAR IN THE SESSION,

REMEMBERED THINKING,
"HOSS, YOU AIN'T JIVIN'."

ON TOUR, WILLIAMS CONTINUED
DRAWING HUGE CROWDS,

THOUGH HE OFTEN WAS DRUNK
OR SURLY ON STAGE

OR SIMPLY FAILED TO APPEAR.

WILLIAMS: â„¤ ...OUT OF
THIS WORLD ALIVE... â„¤

NARRATOR: IN RICHMOND,
VIRGINIA, WITH RAY PRICE
AS THE OPENING ACT,

HE HAD TROUBLE REMEMBERING
THE LYRICS AND STAYING ON KEY

AND WALKED OFF
AFTER 3 SONGS,

LEAVING PRICE
AND THE DRIFTING COWBOYS

TO TRY TO APPEASE
THE ANGRY CROWD.

AFTER ANOTHER RAGGED
PERFORMANCE,

A DISGUSTED
ROY ACUFF TOLD HIM,

"YOU'VE GOT A MILLION-DOLLAR
VOICE AND A 10-CENT BRAIN."

WILLIAMS: â„“ ...STRUGGLE AND
STRIVE, I'LL NEVER GET OUT... â„“

NARRATOR: AT A CONCERT
IN EL PASO, HE WAS
IN SUCH BAD SHAPE

THAT MINNIE PEARL
WAS ASKED TO STAY WITH HIM

BETWEEN PERFORMANCES
TO MAKE SURE HE DIDN'T
MISS THE SECOND SHOW.

SHE TRIED TO BRIGHTEN HIS MOOD
BY SINGING "I SAW THE LIGHT."

AND HE PAUSED AND SAID,
"MINNIE, THERE AIN'T NO LIGHT."

WILLIAMS: â„“ ...WORLD ALIVE

WILLIAMS, JR.:
THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT HE SAID.

"THERE AIN'T NO LIGHT
FOR ME, MINNIE."

NOT A GOOD THOUGHT.

NARRATOR: ON AUGUST 11, 1952,
AFTER HEARING REPORTS

THAT WILLIAMS WAS DRUNK
DURING A SHOW IN PENNSYLVANIA,

THE MANAGER OF
THE GRAND OLE OPRY

CALLED HIM UP AND FIRED HIM.

ON OCTOBER 19th,
HE MARRIED 19-YEAR-OLD
BILLIE JEAN JONES.

THE CEREMONY TOOK PLACE
IN NEW ORLEANS

IN AS PUBLIC A MANNER
AS POSSIBLE.

FOR TICKETS RANGING
FROM \$1.00 TO \$2.80,

PEOPLE COULD ATTEND
THE AFTERNOON REHEARSAL

OR THE EVENING CEREMONY,

COMPLETE WITH
A MUSICAL PERFORMANCE.

14,000 FANS ATTENDED.

THEN WILLIAMS WENT BACK ON TOUR
FOR THE REMAINDER OF 1952.

STUART: THOSE LAST DAYS MUST
HAVE BEEN A PHYSICAL CHALLENGE

BECAUSE THE DISEASE OF
ALCOHOLISM AND DRUG ADDICTION,

ON TOP OF WHATEVER
PHYSICAL AILMENTS,

AND RIDING UP AND DOWN THE ROAD
IN A BACK SEAT OF A CAR

TO SING COUNTRY MUSIC
WAS NOT A GLAMOROUS LIFE.

SO IT MUST HAVE BEEN JUST
A PHYSICAL NIGHTMARE

AND A SOUL NIGHTMARE.

WILLIAMS:
â€œ I'M A ROLLING STONE...

NARRATOR:
HIS HEALTH WORSENERD.

CHEST PAINS MADE IT HARD
TO CATCH HIS BREATH.

HIS BACK HURT SO MUCH,

HE SOMETIMES LAID ON
THE FLOORBOARD OF HIS
TOURING CAR CRYING.

"EVERY TIME I CLOSE MY EYES,"
HE SAID,

"I SEE JESUS COMIN' DOWN
THE ROAD.

HE'S COMIN' AFTER OL' HANK."

WILLIAMS: â€œ ON

THE LOST HIGHWAY... â„¤

KEY: EVERYBODY
WAS GRABBING AT HIM.

EVERYBODY WANTED MONEY,
EVERYBODY WANTED THIS,
THEY WANTED THAT.

HE HAD THE TASTE OF SUCCESS,
AND HE HAD SUCH
A FEAR OF LOSING IT

THAT I THINK THAT JUST KEPT
PULLING HIM AND PULLING HIM.

NARRATOR: FOR A RETAINER
OF \$300 A WEEK,

WILLIAMS BROUGHT ON A QUACK
DOCTOR WITH A PHONY DEGREE

WHO ADDED A NEW DRUG TO
HANK'S BAG OF PILLS--
CHLORAL HYDRATE,

PARTICULARLY DANGEROUS
WHEN COMBINED WITH ALCOHOL.

WILLIAMS:
â„¤ OH, THE DAY WE MET...

NARRATOR:
ON DECEMBER 30, 1952,

WILLIAMS PREPARED TO LEAVE
MONTGOMERY FOR TWO SHOWS

IN WEST VIRGINIA AND OHIO.

A FREAK WINTER STORM CANCELLED
HIS PLANS TO FLY,

SO HE HIRED 17-YEAR-OLD
CHARLES CARR

TO DRIVE HIM IN
WILLIAMS' CADILLAC.

THEY STARTED LATE
AND MADE SEVERAL STOPS

FOR WILLIAMS TO BUY BEER
AND FIND A DOCTOR WHO
WOULD PROVIDE HIM WITH

A SHOT OF MORPHINE

BEFORE STOPPING
FOR THE NIGHT.

ON THE 31st,
THEY SET OUT EARLY.

HANK WAS IN GOOD SPIRITS.

AFTER BREAKFAST, HE BOUGHT
A BOTTLE OF BOURBON

AND SANG ALONG WITH
THE RADIO AT TIMES.

STOPPING IN CHATTANOOGA
FOR LUNCH,

HE PLAYED TONY BENNETT'S
VERSION OF "COLD, COLD HEART"

ON THE JUKEBOX
AND LEFT A \$50 TIP.

WILLIAMS: â„“ I WAS
JUST A LAD... â„“

NARRATOR: IT WAS SNOWING
WHEN THEY REACHED KNOXVILLE

AND LEARNED THAT THE FIRST SHOW,
SCHEDULED FOR THAT NIGHT

IN CHARLESTON, WEST VIRGINIA,
HAD BEEN CANCELLED,

AND THEY WERE TO PROCEED
DIRECTLY TO CANTON, OHIO.

WILLIAMS: â„“ NOW I'M
LOST TOO LATE... â„“

NARRATOR: HANK PERSUASSED
A DOCTOR TO GIVE HIM
TWO MORE SHOTS OF MORPHINE

BEFORE THEY DEPARTED
AT 10:45 P.M.

WILLIAMS:
â„“ ON THE LOST HIGHWAY...

NARRATOR: WILLIAMS WAS LYING
DOWN IN THE BACK SEAT,

COVERED BY HIS OVERCOAT

AND A BLANKET,
AS THEY HEADED FOR CANTON.
HE NEVER MADE IT.

SOMEWHERE ON THE MOUNTAIN ROADS
BETWEEN BRISTOL, TENNESSEE

AND OAK HILL, WEST VIRGINIA,
IN THE EARLY HOURS OF
JANUARY 1, 1953,
HANK WILLIAMS,
THE HILLBILLY SHAKESPEARE,
DIED IN THE BACK SEAT
OF HIS CAR.

HE WAS 29 YEARS OLD.

[MUSIC PLAYING ON RADIO]

FOSTER: THERE WAS A RADIO
BEHIND THE COUNTER
PLAYING A HANK WILLIAMS SONG.

SO I ORDERED MY BREAKFAST,
AND THE DJ COMES IN

AND SAID, "WELL,
THERE HE IS, FOLKS,
THE LATE AND
GREAT HANK WILLIAMS."

SO, I SAID TO THE WAITRESS,
"WHAT?"

IS HANK WILLIAMS DEAD?"

AND SHE SAID, "OH, YEAH.
HAVEN'T YOU HEARD?"

HE'S DEAD."

AND I WEPT.

I COULDN'T HELP IT,
'CAUSE THERE
WAS A LOSS, MAN,
FOR ALL MANKIND, I THOUGHT.

NARRATOR: ON SUNDAY,
JANUARY 4,

20,000 MOURNERS GATHERED

OUTSIDE MONTGOMERY'S
MUNICIPAL AUDITORIUM

FOR THE FUNERAL OF
HANK WILLIAMS,

THE LARGEST CROWD
IN THE CITY'S HISTORY

SINCE THE DAY JEFFERSON DAVIS
WAS INAUGURATED

AS PRESIDENT OF THE
CONFEDERACY IN 1861.

ONLY 2,750 COULD FIT INSIDE,

INCLUDING 200 AFRICAN
AMERICANS WHO FILLED
THE SEGREGATED BALCONY,

AS HIS OPEN CASKET WAS
PLACED AT THE FOOT OF THE STAGE,

FLANKED BY FLORAL ARRANGEMENTS
IN THE SHAPE OF A GUITAR.

ERNEST TUBB COMFORTED
LILLIE WILLIAMS IN THE AUDIENCE,

THEN SANG A HYMN WITH
THE DRIFTING COWBOYS.

RED FOLEY PERFORMED
"PEACE IN THE VALLEY,"

AND ROY ACUFF
JOINED HIM AND CARL SMITH

AND WEBB PIERCE TO SING
"I SAW THE LIGHT,"

WHILE LITTLE JIMMY DICKENS,

JUNE CARTER, AND BILL MONROE
SAT WITH THE CROWD.

THE SOUTHWIND SINGERS
SANG AN OLD GOSPEL HYMN.

THEN WILLIAMS WAS LAID TO REST
IN OAKWOOD CEMETERY.

[“YOUR CHEATIN’ HEART”
PLAYING]

WILLIAMS:
â„“ YOUR CHEATING HEART
â„“ WILL MAKE YOU WEEP
â„“ YOU’LL CRY AND CRY
â„“ AND TRY TO SLEEP
â„“ BUT SLEEP WON’T COME...

NARRATOR:
“YOUR CHEATIN’ HEART,”
RELEASED AFTER HIS DEATH,

WOULD GO ON TO BECOME ONE
OF HIS BEST-KNOWN SONGS,
AND FOR MANY PEOPLE
DEFINE COUNTRY MUSIC.

MAN: I LOVED HANK WILLIAMS.

WILLIAMS: â„“ WHEN TEARS
COME DOWN... â„“

MAN: HE HAD HIS HEART
AND HIS SOUL INTO EVERY WORD.

EMOTIONALLY, IT MOVED YOU.

AND IT’S STILL THE SAME.

I STILL LOVE TO HEAR
HIS RECORDS.

I WISH THAT HE’D LIVED
TO BE AS OLD AS I AM,
'CAUSE I KNOW THERE WAS A LOT
OF GREAT SONGS IN THERE.

WILLIAMS: â„“ YOUR CHEATIN’
HEART WILL TELL ON YOU... â„“

GILL: WHAT I LOVED ABOUT
HANK WILLIAMS WERE THOSE SONGS
AND THE WAY HE MADE YOU FEEL
HOW MUCH HE MUST HAVE HURT.

WILLIAMS: â„“ ...AND CALL

MY NAME â„“a

â„“a YOU'LL WALK THE FLOOR...

GILL: I WAS ALWAYS DRAWN TO
THE MELANCHOLY ONES

MORE THAN THE FUN ONES--

"YOUR CHEATIN' HEART,"
"I'M SO LONESOME I COULD CRY."

WILLIAMS:
â„“a ...WILL TELL ON YOU

YOU CAN'T SAY IT
ANY MORE PLAIN

OR ANY MORE POETIC
THAN "I'M SO LONESOME
I COULD CRY."

WILLIAMS: â„“a HEAR THAT
LONESOME WHIP-POOR-WILL â„“a

â„“a HE SOUNDS TOO BLUE TO FLY

â„“a OH, THE MIDNIGHT TRAIN
IS WHINING LOW â„“a

â„“a I'M SO LONESOME I COULD CRY

WILLIAMS: â„“a I'VE NEVER SEEN
A NIGHT SO LONG â„“a

â„“a WHEN TIME GOES
CRAWLIN' BY â„“a

â„“a THE MOON JUST WENT
BEHIND THE CLOUDS â„“a

â„“a TO HIDE ITS FACE
AND CRY â„“a

NARRATOR: NEXT TIME
ON "COUNTRY MUSIC"...

BOBBY BRADDOCK: THERE WAS
A SAYING--"THE BLUES HAD A BABY

AND THEY CALLED IT ROCK
AND ROLL"--AND I ALWAYS SAID,

"YEAH, AND I THINK THE DADDY
WAS THE HILLBILLY."

NARRATOR: TWO NEW CAREERS

ARE LAUNCHED IN MEMPHIS...

MARTY STUART: WHEN IT COMES
TO MUSIC, MEMPHIS HAS ALWAYS
HAD A LITTLE MORE SOUL.

IT'S IN THE GUMBO DOWN THERE.

NARRATOR: AND TWO LEGENDARY
WOMEN COME TO NASHVILLE...

TRISHA YEARWOOD:
WHEN YOU HEAR HER SING,

YOU FEEL THE EMOTION
IN EVERY LYRIC.

NARRATOR: WHEN "COUNTRY MUSIC"
CONTINUES.

PATSY CLINE:
â€œ I GO OUT WALKIN'...

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OF COUNTRY MUSIC,

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â€œ

â€œ

â€œ THE SILENCE OF

A FALLEN STAR â  a

â  a LIGHTS UP A PURPLE SKY

â  a AND AS I WONDER
WHERE YOU ARE â  a

â  a I'M SO LONESOME
I COULD CRY â  a